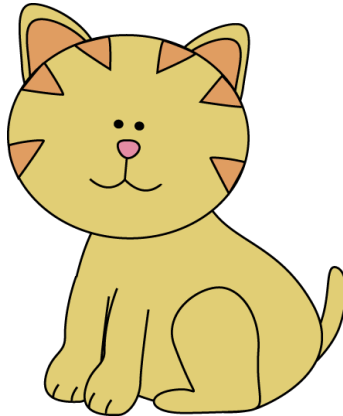


Village Animal Clinic

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Recommendations for **NEW KITTEN**

Owners



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CONGRATULATIONS on the addition of your new family member! Owning a cat can be an extremely rewarding experience, but is also a large responsibility. We hope the information provided in this handout will help guide you on your journey of becoming a kitten parent!

Thank you for choosing Village Animal Clinic to help you with your kitten's health care. If you have any questions concerning your kitten's health, please feel free to call our hospital – our entire staff is here to help you!

How should I introduce my kitten to its new environment?

A cat is naturally inclined to investigate its new surroundings. It is suggested that the kitten's area of exploration be initially limited so that you can supervise its activities. After confining the cat to one room for the first few days, you should slowly allow access to other areas of the home.

How should I introduce my new kitten to my other cat(s) in the household?

Most kittens receive a hostile reception from other household pets, especially from another cat. The other cat usually sees no need for a kitten in the household and these feelings are reinforced if it perceives that special favoritism is being shown to the kitten. It is crucial that the existing cat does not feel it is necessary to compete for food or attention. The new kitten should have its own food bowl and should not be permitted to eat from the other cat's bowl. Although it is natural to spend time holding and cuddling the kitten, the existing cat will quickly sense that it is being neglected if he/she is not receiving the same attention. The new kitten needs lots of love and attention, but the existing cat should not be slighted. In fact, the transition will be smoother if the existing cat is given more attention than usual.

The introduction period will usually last one to two weeks and will have one of three possible outcomes:

- The existing cat will remain hostile to the kitten. Fighting may occasionally occur, especially if both try to eat out of the same bowl at the same time. This is an unlikely occurrence if competition for food and affection are minimized during the first few weeks.
- The existing cat will only tolerate the kitten. Hostility will cease, but the existing cat will act as if the kitten is not present. This is more likely if the existing cat is very independent, has been an only cat for several years, or if marked competition occurred during the first few weeks. This relationship is likely to be permanent.
- Bonding will occur between the existing cat and the kitten. They will play together, groom each other, and sleep near each other. This is more likely to occur if competition is minimized and if the existing cat has been lonely for companionship.

What type of play behavior should I expect from my kitten?

Encouraging appropriate play activities is extremely important beginning the very first day in your home. Stalking and pouncing are important play behaviors in kittens and have an important role in proper muscle development. If given a sufficient outlet for these behaviors using toys, your kitten will be less likely to use family members for these activities. Always play with a toy, not your hands, so your kitten does not learn biting human hands is an acceptable behavior. The best toys are lightweight and movable. These include wads of paper, small balls, and string. Kittens should **ALWAYS** be supervised when playing with string and small balls because these items can cause serious intestinal problems and may even require surgery if they are



swallowed. Any other toy that is small enough to be swallowed should be avoided. The “Cat’s Meow” is a great cat toy choice that is battery operated and enables your kitten to play on its own when you are not available – you simply turn it on and let the fun begin! Daily playtime with your kitten is a great bonding experience for both of you that will last a lifetime.

Can I discipline a kitten?

It is important not to punish, swat, slap, or yell at your kitten. Punishment is an ineffective method of training and should be avoided. Rather, rewarding and encouraging desired behavior is preferred. You may provide your kitten with treats or positive attention to encourage appropriate behavior. Cats and kittens do not have a long attention span, so it is important to reward the good behavior within seconds of that behavior, otherwise they may not understand what the reward is for. If your kitten is doing something he/she should not, redirect that behavior to something more appropriate. Consistency is the key to successful training!

When should my kitten be vaccinated?

There are many fatal diseases in cats. Fortunately, we have the ability to prevent several of these diseases by vaccinating your pet. In order to be effective, these vaccines must be given as a series of injections at 6-8, 12, and 16 weeks of age. This schedule may vary depending on several factors, and together we will come up with the best vaccination protocol for your kitten.

Rabies Rabies is a fatal neurologic disease spread through the saliva of infected animals. State law requires all pets to have this vaccination and an official rabies certificate and license tag will be issued when the vaccine is given. The vaccine is given initially at 16 weeks of age and yearly thereafter.

FVRCP The FVRCP or “feline distemper” vaccine is a combination vaccine protecting against multiple different diseases. This vaccine is given at 8, 12, and 16 weeks of age. After the age of one year, this vaccine is administered every three years.

Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis is also known as feline herpesvirus type I. This virus causes severe upper respiratory tract infections and conjunctivitis. In many cases, these infections become chronic and flare up throughout an infected cat’s life, especially during times of stress.

Calicivirus – leads to upper respiratory tract infections, ulceration of the oral cavity, fevers, and lameness. Some more virulent strains can cause limb edema, skin lesions, liver changes, and can be deadly.

Chlamydomphila felis – is a bacteria that is commonly associated with upper respiratory tract infections and conjunctivitis in cats.

Panleukopenia (feline parvovirus) is a highly infectious disease causing extreme vomiting and diarrhea that can lead to potentially life-threatening dehydration.

Leukemia Feline leukemia virus (FeLV) is spread by close contact with infected cats via contact with saliva, feces, and urine (mutual grooming, fighting, sharing food and water bowls, sharing litter boxes with infected cats puts healthy cats at risk) and can be transmitted from mother to kitten. Feline leukemia positive cats may go on to live a long life, but eventually often succumb to disorders associated with FeLV such as lymphoma, anemia, or other secondary diseases associated with immune system dysfunction. Up to 30% of cats may be asymptomatic carriers of the virus, so an initial blood test should be performed to determine if your kitten is carrying the virus. We recommend this vaccine to cats who will potentially be spending time outside and are exposed to other cats of unknown leukemia status. This vaccine is given as a series of two injections as early as 10 weeks of age, and then is boosted yearly thereafter.

Why does my kitten need more than one vaccination?

When the kitten nurses from its mother, it receives a temporary form of immunity through its mother's milk. This immunity is in the form of proteins called maternal antibodies. For 24-48 hours after birth, the kitten's intestine allows absorption of these antibodies directly into the bloodstream. This immunity is of benefit during the first few weeks of the kitten's life, but at some point, this immunity is no longer effective and the kitten must be able to make its own long-lasting immunity. Vaccinations are used for this purpose. As long as the mother's antibodies are present, vaccinations do not have a chance to stimulate the kitten's immune system as the mother's antibodies interfere by neutralizing the vaccine.

Many factors determine when the kitten will be able to respond to the vaccinations, including the level of immunity in the mother cat, how much antibody has been absorbed, and the number of vaccines given to the kitten. Since we do not know when an individual kitten will lose the short-term immunity provided by its mother, we give a series of vaccinations. We hope that at least two of these will fall in the window of time when the kitten has lost immunity from its mother but has not yet been exposed to disease and can make its own antibodies. A single vaccination, even if effective, is not likely to stimulate the long-term immunity.

The rabies vaccine is an exception to this, as a single injection given at the proper time is enough to produce long-term immunity.

What should I expect after my kitten receives its vaccinations?

It is not uncommon to have sensitivity and even some mild swelling at the injection site following a vaccination. This typically lasts 1-3 days after vaccines are given. Your pet may also develop a low-grade fever and be slightly lethargic for 1-3 days following vaccinations. A more serious reaction to a vaccine would be trouble breathing, vomiting, and/or diarrhea. If any of these occur, please notify our office right away! We have medications and supportive care measures to help make them more comfortable, and we will also pre-medicate your pet prior to vaccines in the future to prevent future reactions.

Why is my kitten being tested for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) and Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV)?

FIV and FeLV are two viruses that mother kittens can transmit to their offspring in utero, during the birthing process, through ingestion of milk, and from grooming. Both of these viruses are contagious to other cats, have the potential to cause serious illness, and can affect lifespan. Because of this, it is important to know whether or not your kitten has either of these viruses as there are lifestyle changes that need to be made to care for these kittens and adult cats appropriately and protect other cats. Additionally, there is a vaccine for FeLV that may be recommended for your kitten if he/she is at risk of being exposed to this virus.

Intestinal Parasites in Kittens

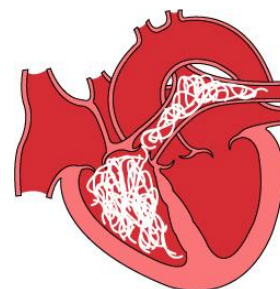
Intestinal parasites are extremely common in kittens. Often, kittens are infected with parasites from their mother, either during gestation or after birth from consuming milk. It is important to have a stool sample microscopically examined to identify the presence of worms, such as roundworms, hookworms, and whipworms, or other parasites such as giardia and coccidia. Fecal parasites can cause diarrhea, but often kittens with a fecal parasite do not show any symptoms. We recommend deworming kittens at least twice even if a stool sample comes back negative as it is possible for your pet to be infected with a parasite but not be shedding eggs into the stool at that moment in time. This is especially important because some fecal parasites can be transmitted to people as well. Additionally, we recommended getting at least two negative fecal tests to be sure your kitten is clear of parasites.

We will likely deworm your kitten today and repeat this in 3-4 weeks. The deworming medications only kill adult worms, so it is necessary that deworming be repeated. During the 3-4 weeks between doses, the larval stages of the worms will mature into adults and become susceptible to the deworming medication. Even though we will deworm your kitten regardless of a negative stool sample, it is still crucial to have a stool sample checked for parasites as giardia and coccidia are protozoal parasites (not worms) and are not susceptible to deworming medications.

Tapeworms are a common intestinal parasite of cats. Tapeworm eggs live inside fleas, and animals become infected when they swallow fleas. In the intestine, fleas are digested and the tapeworms hatch and anchor themselves into the intestinal lining. Any exposure to fleas may result in a new infection. Tapeworm infections can occur in as little as two weeks. It is important for your pet to be on a monthly flea/tick preventative year-round throughout their life to try and prevent tapeworm infestation. Cats infected with tapeworms will pass small segments of the worms in their stool. The segments are white in color and look like grains of rice. They are about 1/8 inch (3 mm) long and may be seen crawling on the surface of the stool. They may also stick to the hair under the tail. If that occurs, they will dry out, shrink to about half their size, and become golden in color. Tapeworm segments do not pass every day or in every stool sample; therefore, inspection of several consecutive bowel movements may be needed to find them. We may examine a stool sample in our office and not find them, and then you may find them the next day. If you find them at any time, please notify us so we may provide the appropriate drug for treatment.

Heartworm Disease

Heartworms are worms that live in the bloodstream and can cause damage to the heart and lungs. Cats are more resistant to heartworm infections than dogs are, and most heartworm positive cats carry only six worms or less. There is no treatment for heartworm disease in cats, so prevention is extremely important. Revolution is a topical heartworm, flea, and tick preventative that should be applied monthly, year-round. Heartworm disease is transmitted by mosquitoes, so any cat living in an area where mosquitoes are found (even if the cat is housed indoors only) is at risk.



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Heartworm preventatives work by killing heartworm larvae that may have already infected your pet. It takes months from the time your pet is bitten by an infected mosquito for the larvae stage to be reached. For example, if your pet is bitten in October, it is the December/January dose of the preventative that will be responsible for killing the larvae – this is why you should never skip doses in the winter just because it is cold outside and you are not seeing any mosquitoes!

What can be done about fleas on my kitten?

Fleas do not spend their entire life cycle on your kitten. Occasionally, they will jump off and seek another host. It is very important to kill fleas on your new kitten before they can become established within your home. Once in the home, it can be very difficult to eliminate a flea infestation. Fleas can cause significant irritation to your cat's skin, transmit parasites (tapeworm), and can bite humans as well.

There are multiple monthly flea preventatives available including Frontline and Revolution (Revolution also protects against heartworm disease). When flea/tick preventatives (and heartworm preventatives) are purchased through the clinic and are given as prescribed every 30 days, they come with a guarantee. If your pet should become infected, treatment (of your pet and your home) will be covered in full by the company making the products. When these products are purchased over the counter or online, this guarantee is not provided.

What should I feed my kitten?

It is recommended that kittens (and adult cats) be fed a diet of primarily canned food. Kittens should be fed 3-4 times daily until they reach the age of 4-6 months, at which time they can be transitioned to being fed twice daily. Your kitten should be on a kitten food until they are one year of age. Then, they can be fed adult cat food.

There are many benefits to feeding canned food rather than a dry diet. Often, cats do not drink as much water as they likely should. Canned foods have a much higher water content than dry foods, so eating a canned food provides their body with additional water intake. This is especially important because cats are prone to developing kidney disease as they age and chronic kidney disease is one of the most common causes of illness/death in geriatric cats. Canned diets are typically higher in protein and lower in carbohydrates than typical dry diets and more closely meet the nutritional needs of a cat as they are carnivorous animals. This also helps to maintain a healthy weight and prevent diabetes mellitus caused by obesity.

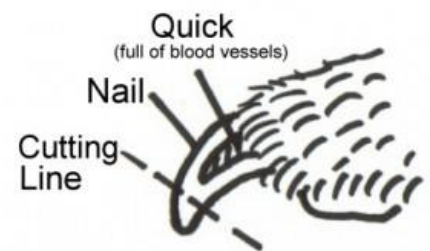
How do I ensure that my kitten is well socialized?

The prime socialization period for cats occurs between two and 12 weeks of age. During that time, the kitten is very impressionable to social influences. If it has good experiences with men, women, children, dogs, and other cats, etc., it is likely to accept them throughout life. If the experiences are absent or unpleasant, it may become apprehensive or adverse to any of them. Therefore, during the period of socialization, we encourage you to expose your cat to as many types of social situations and influences as possible.

Can I trim my kitten's sharp toenails?

Kittens can have very sharp toe nails. Their nails can be trimmed with your regular finger nail clippers or with nail trimmers made for dogs and cats. If you remove too much off the nail, you will cut into the "quick" which causes bleeding and pain. If this happens, neither you nor your cat will want to do this again. Therefore, a few points are helpful:

1. You can see the pink of the quick through the nail. Cut just beyond this pink area to avoid causing bleeding and pain.
2. When cutting nails, use sharp trimmers. Dull trimmers tend to crush the nail and cause pain even if you are not in the quick.
3. You should always have styptic powder available. This is sold in pet stores under several trade names, but it will be labeled for use in trimming nails. Corn starch or baking flour can work to stop bleeding if styptic powder is unavailable
4. Frequent nail trimming is recommended to prevent discomfort caused by overgrown nails, prevent the nails from growing into the paw pads, and help decrease the chance of the nails getting caught and breaking.



Why should I have my female cat spayed?

A spay procedure, or ovariectomy, consists of surgical removal of the ovaries and uterus in a female cat. Spayed female cats are infertile and no longer experience a heat cycle. There are many benefits to having your female cat spayed. Spaying greatly decreases the incidence of mammary tumors and completely eliminates the risk of uterine infections, uterine cancer, and ovarian cancer, all of which can be life threatening. It is

recommended to have your female cat spayed between 4 and 6 months of age, before she experiences her first heat cycle.

In addition to health benefits, spaying your female cat eliminates the chance of an unplanned pregnancy and helps decrease pet overpopulation.

Why should I have my male cat neutered?

Neutering your male cat consists of surgical removal of the testicles. Neutered male cats are no longer fertile. There are many benefits of having your male cat neutered. Neutering eliminates the risk of testicular cancer. When male cats mature, they experience significant personality changes. They often become very territorial and will mark their territory with urine to ward off other cats. They are also more prone to fighting with other cats in the home and the neighborhood, which can lead to wounds, severe infections, and abscesses. We highly recommend having your male cat neutered at 4-6 months of age, before these behaviors begin taking place. The longer your cat sprays urine or fights with other cats, the less likely it is for neutering to eliminate the behaviors.

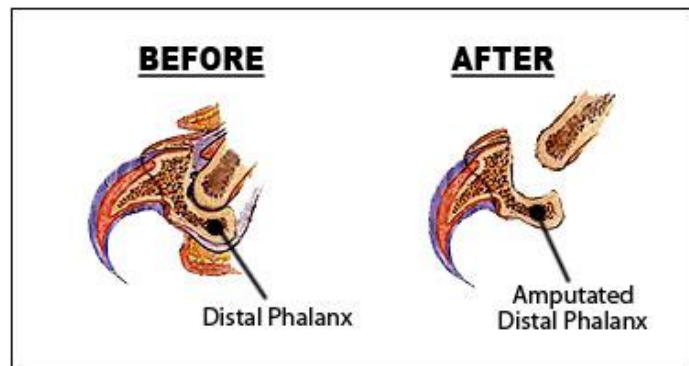
My kitten is becoming destructive, what can be done?

Scratching is a normal behavior it cats and kittens, but it can become bothersome and destructive when your pet is scratching at furniture or other inappropriate items. Here are some suggestions to help manage this behavior:

1. Provide scratching posts/pads. Experiment with different types to see which your cat prefers. Examples include scratching posts with sisal rope or rough fabric, cardboard boxes, lumber, or logs. Placement of these scratching posts is also very important. Cats often like to scratch after waking up, so a scratching post should be placed near where your cat sleeps. If your pet is scratching furniture or another undesirable object, place a scratching post in front of this object to redirect the behavior. If you catch your cat scratching an inappropriate object, gently pick him up and carry him to his scratching post and reward with a treat. Cats should always be positively reinforced rather than punished.



2. Regularly trim your cat's nails to prevent injury or damage to household items. Trim the nails in a calm environment and always provide positive reinforcement.
3. Use synthetic facial pheromone sprays or diffusers to help relieve anxiety. Unwanted scratching behavior may be related to stress, anxiety, attention seeking, or perceived lack of environmental security. Clean the areas where your cat is scratching inappropriately with soap and water. Apply Feliway spray to the area. If undesirable scratching is occurring in several rooms, try a Feliway diffuser.
4. Provide appropriate feline environmental enrichment. Provide a safe place to retreat so your cat feels protected and can rest. Provide opportunities for play and predatory behavior. Provide positive, consistent, predictable human-cat social interaction. Provide an environment that respects the importance of your cat's sense of smell. Cats mark their scent by rubbing their face and body on objects in the home. If possible, avoid cleaning their scent off of these objects.
5. Surgical declawing is considered a last-resort option, and consists of the removal of the nail and one of the bones in the toe. This is something that is done under general anesthesia and can be done at the same time your cat is spayed or neutered. If your cat is declawed, he/she should ALWAYS remain indoors as your cat no longer has any means of defense. It is important to consider the risks of declawing, such as acute pain, infection, and possible nerve trauma. Although uncommon, long-term complications such as lameness, behavioral issues, and chronic neuropathic pain are possible.



Can you recommend something for pet identification?

The latest in pet identification is microchipping. This tiny device (the size of a grain of rice) is implanted with a needle much like administering an injection. A special scanner can detect these chips; veterinary hospitals, humane societies, and animal shelters across the country have these scanners. A national registry permits the return of microchipped pets throughout the United States and Canada. We strongly recommend microchipping all pets.

Pet Insurance

There are several reputable pet insurance companies that offer policies for accidental and illness coverage as well as routine wellness coverage. Most insurance policies require the owner to pay for veterinary services upfront,

and the insurance companies reimburse the owners directly. There are multiple different brochures included in your kitten pack to help you determine which insurance plan is the best for your kitten's needs.

Are there any emergency tips that I should know?

There are several emergency situations that are common. The following recommendations could be valuable for you to know should an emergency situation occur.

Hit by car Let your cat stand up by itself. If it cannot, gently place it on a hard board for transport. Apply pressure to wounds with soft gauze. Keep your cat warm to prevent shock. An injured cat may bite, even people that it knows very well. Use caution for the safety of both you and your cat. Seek medical attention IMMEDIATELY. Even if external wound are minimal, more severe internal wounds are common and need to be addressed right away.

Minor Burns Treat with cool water and seek medical attention.

Ingestion of a Poison.

Kittens commonly eat things they are not supposed to. If your pet has eaten something and you are unsure if it is safe, please call our office (630-690-9191) or the ASPCA poison control hotline (888-426-4435).

Here is a list of some of the most common foods that are hazardous to your kitten (and adult cats)

- Topical flea/tick preventatives made for dogs
- Household cleaners
- Certain types of lilies (Tiger, Day, Asiatic, Easter, Japanese Show)
- Human anti-depressant medications
- Mouse/rat poisons
- Human NSAID creams
- Human NSAID medications (ibuprofen, acetaminophen, aspirin, etc.)

For more information on common toxins, please visit the ASPCA's website: <http://www.asPCA.org/Home/Pet-care/poison-control>