

## **MUST DO'S FOR THE NEW KITTEN**

### **VACCINATION**

Routine vaccination provides protection against life-threatening diseases which may be contracted through the environment of from unprotected cats. In kittens, vaccinations can be given from 9 weeks of age, and a second vaccination given 3 weeks later. Yearly boosters are needed throughout their lives. Prevention of these preventable diseases is always better (and cheaper) than cure.

### **FLEA CONTROL AND WORMING**

It is practically impossible to prevent your kitten from coming into contact with fleas and worms, so regular treatments are necessary to control the problem and prevent a build up within the home. Fleas breed throughout the year in centrally heated homes, therefore it is essential to maintain a flea control programme throughout the year, killing adult fleas and preventing a home infestation.

Worm infestations can result in vomiting and severe diarrhoea and cause a loss of blood, weight and condition. They can also weaken your cat's immune system making it more susceptible to infection. It is also a little embarrassing to find a tapeworm segment on the clothes of a visitor who has been making a fuss on your cat! Some worms that cats carry can also be transmitted to humans through the environment. Eggs cannot be seen by the naked eye; do not assume your pet does not have them!

We promote a flea and worming protocol that work together to ensure your pet has the best level of protection available against these parasites.

### **INSURANCE**

Approximately one pet in three will require veterinary treatment this year, and a large proportion of these will be curious, playful kittens. This incident may be a 'one off' problem such as a broken bone, but it may equally be an ongoing problem like diabetes, skin allergy or arthritis. As medical and surgical treatments continue to advance, the cost of first class veterinary care increases and, in some cases, becomes a limiting factor to the options available to a pet. Insurance helps finance these incidents. The companies that offer pet insurance differ, and it is vital that you study what is on offer; we would always advise a lifetime policy, started as early as possible, as existing health problems before insurance is in place will be excluded from policy.

### **TEETH**

Just as we do, cats have teeth which need to be cared for. Dental disease is one of the more common problems that we see, and much of the dental work that we perform could have been prevented with early care and detection. Dental disease can be uncomfortable, smelly and even painful, and can lead to bacteria travelling to other parts of the body and causing problems with the heart and kidneys. We recommend tooth brushing daily, using a pet tooth paste, the use of pet chlorhexidine products to help to reduce the build up of bacteria in the mouth and complete balanced dry diets that help to clean the teeth whilst your pet is eating. It is important that your kitten gets used to having his or her mouth opened on a regular basis.

## **NUTRITION**

The right diet is vital to keep your cat fit and healthy throughout his or her life. Poor nutrition accounts for a high proportion of health problems that we see. We would recommend a dry, complete balanced diet because it helps to keep your cat's teeth and gums healthy, and because it is most cost effective. There are many different life stage diets to consider. Premium cat-food manufacturers offer a high quality range of diets for cats that are tailored to meet their individual needs, whilst restricting levels of nutrients that may cause harm in excessive amounts. Please speak to a nurse for further information.

## **NEUTERING**

It is surprising how quickly they grow up! Before you know it they are 6 months old and ready to be castrated or spayed. We recommend all cats are neutered, unless intended for breeding. This helps to prevent unwanted behaviour traits, straying and unwanted pregnancies. We recommend that kittens are not allowed out of the house until they have been neutered; female cats can become pregnant at a very young age. Please ask a member of our staff if you have any questions regarding these procedures.

## **BEHAVIOUR/TRAINING**

A well behaved cat is a joy to have around. To ensure good behaviour throughout its life, training should be started as early as possible, and your cat should be fully socialised. During the first 15 weeks of every cat's life, there is a uniquely sensitive period in which they can absorb many experiences without fear. The more they can be exposed to during this time, the less likely they are to become scared and stressed later in life.

Cats are generally clean animals and they are often litter trained before they leave their mother. All you need to do is ensure that the litter tray is kept clean, is in a quiet area, and is kept in a separate location to their feeding area.

## **IDENTIFICATION**

Reflective collar and pet identification tag are a good idea so that your pet can be traced back to you. However some cats have been known to get caught up whilst wearing them, so this is up to you.

A microchip is a must have for lifetime identification. It is so quick and easy for us to do. It is inexpensive at £19.99! Everyday shelters receive calls from frantic, tearful, and distraught owners who have lost their pets. It's a sickening feeling to realise your pet is missing, especially if you know they got out the door or past the gate without an ID tag on. In many cases even if the pet left the home with the tag in place it may come off before the pet is found or removed if they are stolen. Every pet should have a microchip!

**REMEMBER, WE ARE HERE TO GIVE YOU ADVICE ON YOUR PET'S CARE. SO CALL US IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES!**