



Thank you for adopting your new pet from Furry Friends. In the following days as you discover your new pet's character, charisma, impishness and love we hope this little guide will come in handy. Please read this booklet. It is filled with all the important steps of adopting a pet, from nutrition and grooming, to health care and socialization.

In addition to having a good vet, this booklet can answer pretty much all of your questions.

The cat you have adopted has been neutered/spayed, is up to date with vaccines and it has been tested for FELV and Feline Aids. While staying at Furry Friends these lovely creatures were treated with love, kindness and compassion. We take special pride in providing the best care, particularly to those cats with special needs.

Please remember that any change of location can be very stressful and give your new cat some time to adjust. They are sensitive and intelligent animals and assess the situation quickly. They have known adversity and pain and they will know how to recognize love and protection.

It is a special honor to save an abandoned animal. Your decision to adopt this cat is noble and you should feel proud of yourself.

If you have any questions, let us know. We are here to assist.

Bringing your new cat home

Thank you for saving this beautiful animal and providing it with a loving home. You are the proud new owner of a cat. No doubt you're looking forward to years of happy companionship. But what do you do now?

The first thing you should know about your new pet is that most cats hate to travel. After the ride home from the animal shelter, he/she will, most likely, not be in the mood for fun. For the trip home, confine your pet in a sturdy cat carrier. Don't leave him loose in your car where he might panic and cause an accident.

To make his transition to your household as comfortable as possible, select a quiet, closed-in area such as your bedroom or a small room away from the main foot traffic, and provide him with a litter box. Let your new pet become acquainted with that limited area for the first few days. Let him sniff all your belongings and investigate all the hiding places. Over a few days, slowly introduce him to the rest of your house, including the other pets and household members. It will take a little while, but he will eventually begin to feel at home.

Cats vary in terms of how demanding they are as pets, so let yours guide you to the level of attention he wants, whether it's your hand for petting or your lap for sitting. Provide him with the necessary creature comforts and give him the companionship he seeks, and he will be content.

The following is a mini-primer of cats' requirements for a happy life:

Cleanliness. Your new cat will prize a clean environment and a clean body. Cats are naturally fastidious and most will instinctively use a litter box; for some, you may need to place the cat in the box and make little scratching motions with their front paws so they get the idea. Many place such a premium on cleanliness that you should clean the box daily or several times a week. Cats also value privacy, so place the litter box in a convenient but secluded spot. Most cats will spend hours grooming themselves, but even the most avid groomer can use a little help from time to time. Nail clipping and ear and teeth cleaning are tasks you can do to keep your cat well groomed. Even short-haired cats benefit from weekly brushing, a task that can be pleasurable for both of you.

Security. Provide your cat with safety and security. Always use a cat carrier when transporting your pet. Protect him by making certain that all windows are securely screened, and that the washer and dryer are kept closed and are inspected before each use.

Health Care. Animal you have just adopted has been at the vet's and is up to date with its shots. If you already have dogs or cats at home, make sure they are up-to-date on their shots—including feline leukemia—and in good general health before introducing your new cat.

Take your new cat to the veterinarian within a week after adoption. There, he will receive a health check and any needed follow up vaccinations. Your cat has been spayed/neutered while staying with Furry Friends. This will provide many years of good health, better behavior and most importantly it is preventing overpopulation of unwanted kittens.

House Rules. Provide your cat with some "basic training" to help him get along in your home. It's true that cats usually have their own ideas about how to do things. Even so, most cats can be taught to obey simple rules like not scratching the couch, eating plants, or jumping up on the kitchen counter. With repeated, gentle, and consistent training, your cat will learn.

Yelling at your cat never works. Instead, positively reward him and provide him with alternative choices. A good scratching post—coupled with the handy squirt gun filled with water—can save your couch, your chair, and your nerves.

Room for Fun. Finally, provide your cat with an interesting indoor environment. Cats love to play and will appreciate simple and inexpensive toys. Ping-Pong balls and paper bags can provide hours of fun. A comfortable perch by a window can become your cat's very own entertainment and relaxation center.

Toys are very important for cats. They not only fight boredom, they also give cats a chance to express their prey-chasing drives. If you're the one moving the toy while your cat chases after it, playtime can be a bonding experience for both of you.

Enjoy Your Rewards. Now that you've made certain all the basic provisions are attended to, you can relax and enjoy your new pet. It may take a couple of weeks for him to adjust to life with you. But before you know it, you'll be curled up on the couch together, watching TV like old pals, and you won't remember what life was like without him.

Introducing one cat to another

The Steps to Take

- Set up a comfortable "safe room" for New Cat. Put her food, water, litter box (not near the food), scratching post, toys, and bed or other sleeping mat there.
- If you expect a great deal of "hissy-spitty" behavior through the closed door from both cats. This is natural and normal; they are just starting to explore their "pecking order."
- Scent is very important for cats. Let each of them smell the other indirectly, by rubbing a towel on one and letting the other smell it. They will soon accept the scent as a normal part of the house.
- Once or twice, switch roles. Put New Cat in the normal living quarters, and let your resident cat sniff out the new cat's Safe Room.
- After a day or so, let the two cats sniff each other through a baby-gate or through a barely-opened door. Gauge the rate at which they seem to be acclimating to each other.

- When you think they're ready, let them mingle under your supervision. Ignore hissing and growling, but you may have to intervene if a physical battle breaks out. Again, take this step slowly, depending on how quickly they get along. If they do seem to tolerate each other, even begrudgingly, praise both of them profusely.
- Make their first activities together enjoyable ones so they will learn to associate pleasure with the presence of the other cat. Feeding (with their own separate dishes), playing, and petting. Keep up with the praise.
- If things start going badly, separate them again, and then start where you left off. If one cat seems to consistently be the aggressor, give her some "time out," then try again a little bit later.

The introduction can take from two hours to six months, so don't be discouraged if your cats don't seem to get along well at first. Often the case is that they will eventually be "best buddies."

Factors to Consider

- If you already have more than one cat, use the "alpha cat" for preliminary introductions. Once he/she accepts the newcomer, the other resident cats will quickly fall in line.
- Lots of snuggle-time and attention is indicated for all cats concerned during this period.

With patience and perseverance, you can turn what might appear at first as an "armed camp" into a haven of peace for your integrated feline family. Congratulations on giving another cat in need a permanent home!

Six Reasons to Keep Your Cat Indoors



Cars Not only are outdoor cats regularly hit by cars, but they also get into trouble when seeking shelter on top of tires and close to engines. “In the cold, cats will crawl into any open space in a car,” says Marrow. “If someone gets in and turns the car on, it can be deadly for a cat.”

Chemicals Suburban lawns are often sprayed with pesticides and are therefore not ideal stomping grounds for your feline. The chemicals can make your pet ill. Cats that eat poisoned rodents or ingest other toxins from dumpsters or garages can also become very sick. Cats are very attracted to antifreeze. They like to lick it, and it can kill them. Vicious neighbors that do not like cats most often use antifreeze to kill neighborhood cats.

Coyotes- Canines- Raccoons- Feral cats - Any animal can be a danger to your cat, from dogs and raccoons to their own kind. Cats get into trouble upon entering yards patrolled by canines, and they are also prone to fighting with other neighborhood cats. Cats are very territorial, and they can be wounded in fights with other cats. They can wind up with abscesses and become deathly ill.

Strangers Hard as it is to believe, not everybody is a cat lover. If your pet's path crosses the wrong neighbor, it may be in danger if that person decides to spray it with a cleaning agent or worse. Just as you wouldn't leave your cat in a stranger's care, you should be wary of letting it interact willy-nilly with people you don't know.

Confusion While cats are famous for their sense of direction, kitties that are injured or scared can lose their bearings and become lost. Their access to your home can get blocked, such as by rush hour traffic, or they may be unable to get down from a high place, like a roof or a tree.

Extreme cold/Heat – Weather can change in an instant and while cats are good at finding shelter when adverse weather happens what they usually fall pray to is disorientation. While trying to escape harsh weather conditions, cat can very easily get disoriented, become unable to sniff their way back to their home, hide under cars that always pose danger of running them over. They also tend to run into garages, sheds or storage facilities, get trapped inside because no one is aware they are there looking for a shelter. With no one aware of their location they die of hunger, fatigue and dehydration.

Your cat's home is its kingdom, and the outside world is full of threats to its health and happiness. To keep your cat from making a break for it, make sure open windows have screens, teach your family to be alert to Fluffy's whereabouts before opening doors, and use a kitty crate to transport your cat back and forth from the vet. Remember that an indoor cat can't miss what it's never had.

Coyotes & Kitty Cats Predators in our urban neighborhoods



Many of us grew up with the hilarious cartoons depicting the lame brained Wilie Coyote constantly being humiliated by the Road Runner.

In reality this could not be farther from the truth. In actuality the coyote is one of nature's most cunning and clever predators.

In some cultures the coyote is known as "The Trickster". And trickster he is, stealing our small, precious pets right out of our yards.

Often I see a number of posters declaring "Lost Cat". More than likely our small companions are not lost--they have just become meals for the clever coyote. I know a great deal about the behavior of cats. Cats stay where they are loved, fed, and feel at comfort. It is not likely that a cat will leave a home unless they choose to run away because of the home environment or an urban predator takes them away.

Simply stated, **"The only safe pet is one that is kept indoors. In many parts of this country a pet that is allowed outdoors has a high probability of being in danger, sooner or later!"**

Don't be fooled if you have not seen or heard coyotes in your community. They do not go door-to-door announcing themselves and asking, "I am the new coyote in your neighborhood. Would you happen to have a small pet that would like to come outdoors and play?"



De-clawing

If you are considering de-clawing your cat, please read this. It will only take a moment, and it will give you valuable information to help you in your decision.

Before you make the decision to de-claw your cat, there are some important facts you should know. De-clawing is not like a manicure. It is serious surgery. Your cat's claw is *not* a toenail. It is actually closely adhered to the bone. So closely adhered that to remove the claw, the last bone of your the cat's claw has to be removed. De-clawing is actually an amputation of the last joint of your cat's "toes". When you envision that, it becomes clear why de-clawing is not a humane act. It is a painful surgery, with a painful recovery period. And remember that during the time of recuperation from the surgery your cat would still have to use its feet to walk, jump, and scratch in its litter box regardless of the pain it is experiencing. Wheelchairs and bedpans are not an option for a cat.

No cat lover would doubt that cats--whose senses are much keener than ours--suffer pain. They may, however, hide it better. Not only are they proud, they instinctively know that they are at risk when in a weakened position, and by nature will attempt to hide it. But make no mistake. This is not a surgery to be taken lightly.

Your cat's body is perfectly designed to give it the grace, agility and beauty that is unique to felines. Its claws are an important part of this design. Amputating the important part of their anatomy that contains the claws drastically alters the conformation of their feet. The cat is also deprived of its primary means of defense, leaving it prey to predators if it ever escapes to the outdoors.

Okay, so now you realize that de-clawing is too drastic a solution, but you're still concerned about keeping your household furnishings intact. Is there an acceptable solution? Happily, the answer is yes. A big, joyful, humane YES! Actually there are several. The following website www.catscratching.com provides many solutions as well as and insight into the psychology of why cats scratch. You can teach your cat to use a scratching post. You can trim the front claws. You can also employ aversion methods. One of the best solutions I've found is Soft Paws®. Soft Paws are lightweight vinyl nail caps that you glue on the cat's front claws. They're great for households with small children and are extremely useful for people who are away from home all day and can't exercise the watchfulness necessary to train a cat to use a scratching post. Then you simply replace it. You can find Soft Paws® on the web www.softpaws.com or call 1-800-989-2542.

DECLAWING

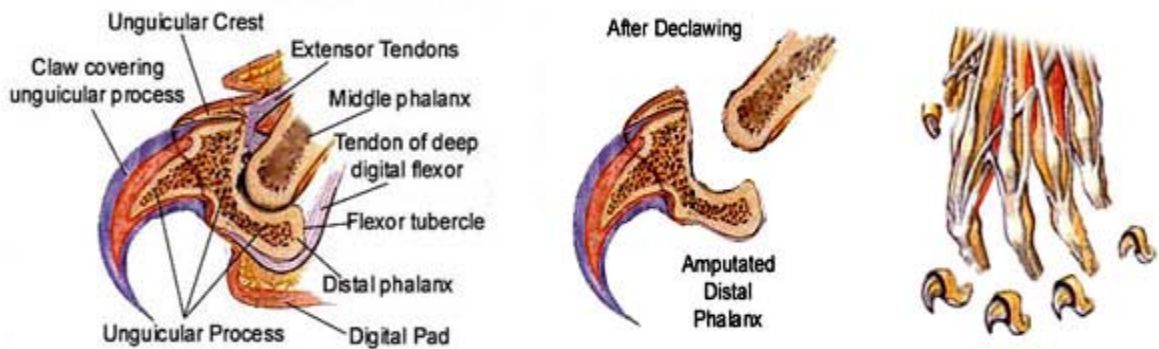
An inhumane and dangerous procedure

The Cat's Claws

Unlike most mammals who walk on the soles of the paws or feet, cats are digitigrade, which means they walk on their toes. Their back, shoulder, paw and leg joints, muscles, tendons, ligaments and nerves are naturally designed to support and distribute the cat's weight across its toes as it walks, runs and climbs. A cat's claws are used for balance, for exercising, and for stretching the muscles in their legs, back, shoulders, and paws. Removal of the last digits of the toes drastically alters the conformation of their feet and causes the feet to meet the ground at an unnatural angle that can cause back pain similar to that in humans caused by wearing improper shoes.

Understanding De-clawing (*Onychectomy*)

Contrary to most people's understanding, de-clawing consists of amputating not just the claws, but the whole phalanx (up to the joint), including bones, ligaments, and tendons! To remove the claw, the bone, nerve, joint capsule, collateral ligaments, and the extensor and flexor tendons must all be amputated. Thus de-clawing is not a “simple”, single surgery but **10 separate**, painful amputations of the third phalanx up to the last joint of each toe. A graphic comparison in human terms would be the cutting off of a person's finger at the last joint of each finger.



Adapted from: Atlas of Feline Anatomy for Veterinarians; Hudson/Hamilton, W.B. Saunders Company

Many vets and clinic staff deliberately misinform and mislead clients into believing that de-clawing removes only the claws in the hopes that clients are left with the impression that the procedure is a "minor" surgery comparable to spay/neuter procedures and certainly doesn't involve amputation (partial or complete) of the terminal-toe bone, ligaments and tendons.

Complications

The rate of complication is relatively high compared with other so-called routine procedures. Complications of this amputation can be excruciating pain, damage to the radial nerve, hemorrhage, bone chips that prevent healing, painful re-growth of deformed claw inside of the paw which is not visible to the eye, and chronic back and joint pain as shoulder, leg and back muscles weaken.

Other complications include postoperative hemorrhage, either immediate or following bandage removal is a fairly frequent occurrence, paw ischemia, lameness due to wound infection or footpad laceration, exposure necrosis of the second phalanx, and abscess associated with retention of portions of the third phalanx.



Necrosis and sloughing of soft tissue following onychectomy



Regrowth of claws associated with inadequate amputation of the third phalanx of the first digit



Radial neuroparaxia associated with onychectomy

Photographs: Courtesy of College of Veterinary Medicine, Ohio State University

Psychological & Behavioral Complications

Some cats are so shocked by de-clawing that their personalities change. Cats that were lively and friendly have become withdrawn and introverted after being de-clawed. Others, deprived of their primary means of defense, become nervous, fearful, and/or aggressive, often resorting to their only remaining means of defense, their teeth. In some cases, when de-clawed cats use the litter box after surgery, their feet are so tender they associate their new pain with the box...permanently, resulting in a life-long aversion to using the litter box. "The consequences of de-clawing are often pathetic. Changes in behavior can occur. A de-clawed cat frequently resorts to biting when confronted with even minor threats. Chronic physical ailments such as cystitis or skin disorders can be manifestations of a de-clawed cat's frustration and stress"

Moral, Ethical and Humane Considerations

The veterinary justification for de-clawing is that the owner may otherwise dispose of the cat, perhaps cruelly. It is ethically inappropriate, in the long term, for veterinarians to submit to this form of moral blackmail from their clients.

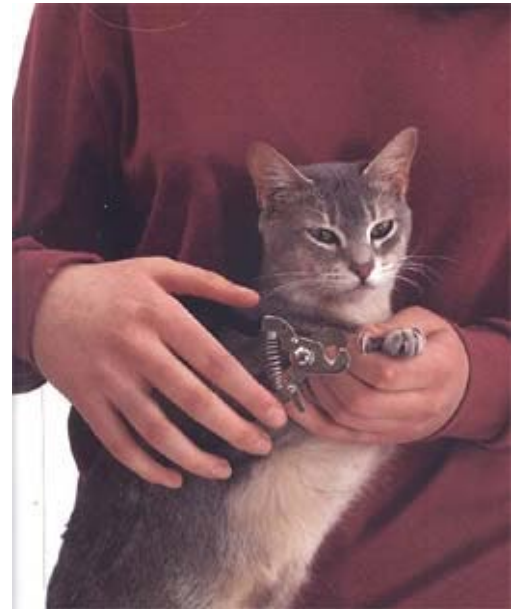
“The inhumanity of the procedure is clearly demonstrated by the nature of cats' recovery from anesthesia following the surgery. Unlike routine recoveries, including recovery from neutering surgeries, which are fairly peaceful, de-clawing surgery results in cats bouncing off the walls of the recovery cage because of excruciating pain. Cats that are more stoic huddle in the corner of the recovery cage, immobilized in a state of helplessness, presumably by overwhelming pain. De-clawing fits the dictionary definition of mutilation to a tee.”

Your cat should trust you, and depend upon you for protection. Don't betray that trust by de-clawing your cat.

Nail trimming

If possible start training your cat to have her claws trimmed as a kitten. Gently stroke your cat's paws often, getting her used to having her paws held before you attempt trimming. Be sure to reward your cat with a special food treat-one that she receives only during claw trimming or some other grooming procedure-during or immediately after trimming. The best time to trim your cat's claws is when she is relaxed or sleepy. Never try to give a pedicure right after a stressful experience or an energetic round of play.

Your cat should be resting comfortably on your lap, the floor, or a table. Hold a paw in one hand and press a toe pad gently to extend the claw. Notice the pink tissue (the quick) on the inside of the claw. Avoid the quick when you trim the claw; cutting into it will cause pain and bleeding. Remove the sharp tip below the quick (away from the toe), clipping about halfway between the end of the quick and the tip of claw. If your cat becomes impatient, take a break and try again later. Even if you can clip only a claw or two a day, eventually you'll complete the task. (Because cats do little damage with their rear claws and do a good job of keeping them trim themselves-by chewing them-many cat owners never clip the rear claws. Others trim their cats' rear claws three or four times a year or have them done by their veterinarian or a professional groomer.)



Many people hold the clippers at right angles to the nail, thus cutting across the nail. This tends to make the nail more subject to splitting or fraying. It is better to hold the clippers in a vertical position--that is, up and down, so that the claw is trimmed from bottom to top instead of across the nail. This position help prevent splitting.

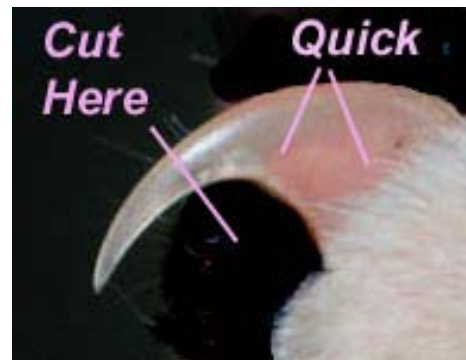


If you accidentally clip into the quick, don't panic. The claw may bleed for a moment, but it will usually stop very quickly. Soothe your cat by speaking softly to her and stroking her head. If the bleeding hasn't stopped after a minute or so, touch a styptic pencil to the claw end or pat on styptic powder to help staunch the bleeding.

How often you need to clip your cat's claws depends somewhat on how much of the tip you remove, but usually a clipping every ten to fourteen days will suffice. If your cat absolutely refuses to allow you to clip tier claws, get help from your veterinarian or a professional groomer

Gently press the cat's toe pads to reveal sharp claws in need of a trim.

Notice the pink tissue (the **quick**) on the inside of the claw. **Avoid the quick** when you trim the claw; cutting into it will cause pain and bleeding. Remove the sharp tip below the quick (away from the toe), clipping about halfway between the end of the quick and the tip of claw.



Special claw trimmers (two types are shown) are available from veterinarians or pet supply stores, but sharp nail clippers for humans work just as well. Keep a styptic (astringent) pencil or powder on hand in case you accidentally clip into the quick and bleeding hasn't stopped within a couple of minutes.



Clumping Clay Litters: A Deadly Convenience?

Cats die. Kittens die. It's part of life. But we still grieve when they die, even though we know it is only the body, not the spirit, that is gone. How much worse we feel when those deaths were unnecessary, could have been prevented by something as simple as changing the kind of litter we use.

I breed Japanese Bobtail cats and I grieved in 1994 when an entire litter of kittens (born in November 1993) died. Despite round-the-clock nursing and force-feeding of fluids and food, one kitten, then another, let go of his grasp on life.

The three kittens started out as a robust, lively group. Then, at weaning time, just as they were learning to use the litter box, they began to vomit a yellow frothy substance and to pass yellow diarrhea; the diarrhea looked and smelled like clay. They also had nasal and eye discharge. The diarrhea proceeded to turn harder and even more clay-like, and finally the kittens stopped moving their bowels at all. The veterinarians said they could feel "a hard mass" inside. The kittens dwindled into thin, dehydrated, frail little skeletons, sunk in apathy. Then they died.

When these kittens first fell sick, I wasn't too worried, because I had seen the same set of symptoms in two earlier litters. The first time it happened I'd lost one kitten, but the other survived with a week of force-feeding fluids. When a second litter started to exhibit the same symptoms, we took the kittens and their parents to the veterinarian, who tested them for everything from intestinal parasites to feline AIDS. The results were negative. "Some kind of virus" was the vague diagnosis, or "possibly *Guardia*" (an intestinal parasite), even though the test for it was negative. We nursed them, gave them fluids and love, and like the previous kittens; these two were over the problem in a week.

So the third time, with the November kittens, although I was a little worried, I was confident we could pull these through as well. But their illness dragged on for three weeks, and they grew progressively weaker. Again we had the cats and kittens tested for a variety of problems; again, nothing. And then, all within the same week, the kittens died.

When a fourth litter, born in late March 1994, began to exhibit the same symptoms yet again, I felt frustrated, frightened, and helpless. What was going on? Was there something in the environment? Was my home somehow a "sick house?" Was one of the adult cats carrying something that the kittens were picking up? I always keep my cats indoors, so it couldn't be exposure to outside cats.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

I decided I needed a new perspective and began to look for a holistic veterinarian. The next day, a friend gave me the card of a new holistic veterinarian in town. But before I had the chance to take the kittens to see this new vet, I was struck by a bolt of lightning. The clumping litter! It was almost as though someone had whispered it into my ear. It made perfect sense. Everything fit; it explained all the symptoms.

My thinking went along these lines:

1. Clumping litter is designed to form a hard, insoluble mass when it gets wet. It also produces a fine dust when stirred (as when a cat scratches around to bury a recent deposit). And these clumping litters absorb many times their weight in fluids.
2. When cats or kittens use the litter box, they lick themselves clean; anything their tongues encounter gets ingested. Kittens especially tend to ingest a lot of litter when they are first learning to use the box.
3. Once the litter is inside a kitten or cat, it expands, forming a mass and coating the interior—thus, both causing dehydration by drawing fluids out of the cat or kitten, and compounding the problem by preventing any absorption of nutrients or fluids.

My cats and kittens had probably reacted with diarrhea initially in an effort to cleanse their bodies of the litter before it had a chance to settle and coat their insides. But kittens have very small intestines; a hard insoluble mass could very well produce a complete and fatal blockage within a couple of weeks.

On the strength of these deductions, I immediately went out and bought a plant-based litter to replace the clumping litter. I also took several of the hard, clay-like lumps of stool produced by two of the kittens and smeared them open. Not only did the stools have the consistency, smell, and texture of clay, but they even retained the color of the litter (gray with blue flecks) inside. This was confirmation enough for me.

As soon as I could, I took all the kittens, along with their mother, to Dr. Chalmers, who said that she had already heard of problems like this with the clumping clay litters. She put the kittens on a holistic course of treatment (slippery elm to help soothe the intestines; homemade chicken broth to nourish the kittens without putting further strain on their insides).

She also showed me an article by Lisa Newman, another holistic health practitioner, citing some of the cases of illness and death that she (Lisa Newman) has seen first hand—illnesses and deaths most likely caused by clumping litter. A light went on in my head when I read the following:

“There has been a rise in depressed immune systems, respiratory distress, irritable bowel syndrome, and vomiting (other than hair balls) among cats that I have seen in the past two years. All had one thing in common...a clumping product in their litter box. In several cases, simply removing the litter improved the condition of the cat.”

The problem of health difficulties and even deaths resulting from clumping litters appears to be more prevalent than most people are aware of. I recently spoke with another Japanese Bobtail breeder, who told me of a kitten she sold that subsequently became very ill with a severe respiratory problem. The new owner used a clumping litter, and her veterinarian found that the kitten's lungs were coated with dust from the litter.

For a veterinarian to spot this problem is unusual. A more common diagnosis would lay the blame at the door of a virus, germ, fungus or parasite. There is not a general awareness yet that the clumping litters can be harmful—even fatal—to cats.

WHAT YOU CAN DO?

You may feel as horrified as I do at the thought that there must be thousands of kittens and cats (and other animals) ailing or even dying from clumping clay litters. What can we do to prevent such suffering?

One thing is let the manufacturers know we won't buy such products. My husband called a company that makes one of these clumping litters. The woman he spoke with said that the company is aware that clumping litters may be causing health problems, but that it is the consumer's responsibility to make sure their cats don't eat the stuff.

My husband pointed out that cats clean themselves with their mouths, so of course they're going to eat the litter every time they use their cat boxes. Unfortunately, the company's representative maintained her "buyer beware" position.

Given the attitudes of such companies, we can vote with our pocketbooks by purchasing products from businesses that are more responsive to our concerns. Be sure to let the makers of the clumping litter know why you no longer purchase their product. You might even choose to boycott all products made by these companies (it isn't hard to find out who makes what—just read the labels). An even more effective move might be to show this article to the owners or managers of stores selling these products.

If you love cats as I do, spread the word. Tell everyone you know about this problem. Tell your veterinarian. You may save the lives of many kittens, cats, and other beloved creatures.

Alternatives to clumping clay litters

Clay litters are dangerous to cats and can cause many illnesses and potentially death, especially in young kittens. Furry Friends uses Blue Mountain pine pellets that can be purchased at many feed stores. 40 pound bag costs \$5 and it is safe to use. This is not just great savings but also safe for your cats. It has great absorbency and only very little is needed to cover the bottom of the litter box. This way you can dump the litter box daily and it eliminates the need to scoop the poop 😊

Below listed options are also safe, natural and environmentally friendly but more costly.

Recommend alternatives

If you want a **non-clay, clumping, scoopable litter**, there are really only three choices that I know of:

- SWheatScoop, which is made from wheat and is indeed a clumping and scoopable litter. The key difference between it and clumping clay litters is that the wheat clumps are said to fall apart when they get wet, therefore not posing the health hazard that an indissoluble clump would. <http://www.swheatscoop.com/>
- WonderWheat, which I have never tried but sounds as though it is the Australian equivalent of SWheatScoop. <http://www.wonderwheat.com.au/>
- The World's Best Cat Litter. I used to not recommend this litter, for reasons listed under the product description, but I have decided since that it is still one of the best alternatives available, so I now recommend it again. <http://www.worldsbestcatlitter.com/>

If you want an excellent product that is acceptable to cats, easy on the environment, and easy on you, and you are willing to accept that they do not clump, the following litters are all on my short list (that is, they are all quite satisfactory, and I will use them without hesitation):

- CareFresh - <http://www.absorbent.com/>
- Feline Pine - <http://www.felinepine.com/>
- Yesterday's News - <http://www.yesterdaysnews.com>

PETS DON'T NEED SHOTS EVERY YEAR

Experts say annual vaccines waste money, can be risky

Debra Grierson leaves the veterinarian's office clutching Maddie and Beignet, her Yorkshire terriers, and a credit card receipt for nearly \$400. That's the cost for the tiny dogs' annual exams, including heartworm checks, dental checks and a barrage of shots.

"They're just like our children," said the Houston homemaker. "We would do anything, whatever they needed." What many pet owners don't know, researchers say, is that most yearly vaccines for dogs and cats are a waste of money -- and potentially deadly. Shots for the most important pet diseases last three to seven years, or longer, and annual shots put pets at greater risk of vaccine-related problems.

The Texas Department of Health is holding public hearings to consider changing the yearly rabies shot requirement to once every three years. Thirty-three other states already have adopted a triennial rabies schedule. Texas A&M University's and most other veterinary schools now teach that most shots should be given every three years.

"Veterinarians are charging customers \$36 million a year for vaccinations that are not necessary," said Bob Rogers, a vet in Spring who adopted a reduced vaccine schedule. "Not only are these vaccines unnecessary, they're causing harm to pets."

Just as humans don't need a measles shot every year, neither do dogs or cats need annual injections for illnesses such as parvo, distemper or kennel cough. Even rabies shots are effective for at least three years.

The news has been slow to reach consumers, partly because few veterinarians outside academic settings are embracing the concept. Vaccine makers haven't done the studies needed to change vaccine labels. Vets, who charge \$30 to \$60 for yearly shots, are loath to defy vaccine label instructions and lose an important source of revenue. In addition, they worry their patients won't fare as well without yearly exams.

The movement to extend vaccine intervals is gaining ground because of growing evidence that vaccines themselves can trigger a fatal cancer in cats and a deadly blood disorder in dogs.

When rabies shots became common for pets in the 1950s, no one questioned the value of annual vaccination. Distemper, which kills 50 percent of victims, could be warded off with a shot. Parvovirus, which kills swiftly and gruesomely by causing a toxic proliferation of bacteria in the digestive system, was vanquished with a vaccine. Over the years, more and more shots were added to the schedule, preventing costly and potentially deadly disease in furry family members.

Then animal doctors began noticing something ominous: rare instances of cancer in normal, healthy cats and an unusual immune reaction in dogs. The shots apparently caused feline fibrosarcoma, a grotesque tumor at the site of the shot, which is fatal if not discovered early and cut out completely. Dogs developed a vaccine-related disease in

which the dog's body rejects its own blood. Less frequent vaccines could reduce that risk, Schultz reasoned. Having observed that humans got lifetime immunity from most of their childhood vaccines, Schultz applied the same logic to dogs. He vaccinated them for rabies, parvo, kennel cough and distemper and then exposed them to the disease-causing organisms after three, five and seven years. The animals remained healthy, validating his hunch. He continued his experiment by measuring antibody levels in the dogs' blood nine and 15 years after vaccination. He found the levels sufficient to prevent disease.

But many vets are uncomfortable making a drastic change in practice without data from large-scale studies to back them up. There is no animal equivalent of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which monitors outbreaks of vaccine-preventable disease in people, thus keeping tabs on a vaccine's effectiveness.

Federal authorities require vaccine makers to show only that a vaccine is effective for a reasonable amount of time, usually one year. Richards notes that studies to get a feline vaccine licensed in the first place are typically quite small, involving 25 to 30 cats at most.

Vaccination findings - Veterinary research challenges the notion that pets need to be vaccinated every 12 months. Some of the findings:

Cat vaccines/Minimum duration of immunity

- Cat rabies - 3 years
- Feline panleukopenia virus - 6 years
- Feline herpesvirus - 5 or 6 years
- Feline calicivirus - 3 years

Recommendations for cats

- Panleukopenia, herpesvirus (rhinotracheitis), calicivirus: Following initial kitten shots, provide booster one year later and every three years thereafter.
- Rabies: At 8 weeks of age, thereafter as required by law.
- Feline leukemia: Use only in high-risk cats. Best protection is two vaccines prior to 12 weeks of age, with boosters repeated annually.
- Bordatella: Use prior to boarding.
- Feline infectious peritonitis: Not recommended.
- Chlamydia: Not recommended.
- Ringworm: May be used during an outbreak in a home.

Recommended list of cat food

All below listed foods are acceptable in both wet and dry form. The best food you can offer to your pet is the one without any By-products, without chemicals, preservatives and corn! Please read the labels.

Natural Balance

<http://www.naturalbalanceinc.com/home/usa.tpl>

Innova, California Natural

<http://www.naturapet.com/where-to-buy/>

Felidae

<http://www.canidae.com/company/storelocator.html>

Precise

Precise is sold at Natural Pet NW and All Natural Pet store

California Wellness

Sold nationwide at most pet stores.

http://www.cherrybrook.com/index.cfm/a/catalog.CatShow/catid/376/cname/Wellness_Cat_Food

Premium Edge

http://www.premiumedgepetfood.com/dealer_locator/

Chicken Soup for Soul

http://www.chickensoupforthevetloverssoul.com/dealer_locator/

Solid Gold-Katz N Flocken

<http://www.solidgoldhealth.com/stores/>

Understanding Pet Food Ingredients

Read the labels

Dogs and cats are carnivores, and do best on a meat-based diet. The protein used in pet food comes from a variety of sources. When cattle, swine, chickens, lambs, or other animals are slaughtered, lean muscle tissue is trimmed away from the carcass for human consumption, along with the few organs that people like to eat, such as tongues and tripe.

However, about 50% of every food animal does not get used in human foods. Whatever remains of the carcass — heads, feet, bones, blood, intestines, lungs, spleens, livers, ligaments, fat trimmings, unborn babies, and other parts not generally consumed by humans — is used in pet food, animal feed, fertilizer, industrial lubricants, soap, rubber, and other products. These “other parts” are known as “by-products.” By-products are used in feed for poultry and livestock as well as in pet food.

Meat or poultry “by-products” are very common in wet pet foods. Remember that “meat” refers to only cows, swine, sheep, and goats. Since sheep and goats are rare compared to the 37 million cows and 100 million hogs slaughtered for food every year, nearly all meat by-products come from cattle and pigs.

The better brands of pet food, such as many “super-premium,” “natural,” and “organic” varieties, do not use by-products. On the label, you’ll see one or more named meats among the first few ingredients, such as “turkey” or “lamb.” These meats are still mainly leftover scraps; in the case of poultry, bones are allowed, so “chicken” consists mainly of backs and frames—the spine and ribs, minus their expensive breast meat. The small amount of meat left on the bones is the meat in the pet food. Meat meals, poultry meals, by-product meals, and meat-and-bone meal are common ingredients in dry pet foods. The term “meal” means that these materials are not used fresh, but have been rendered. While there are chicken, turkey, and poultry by-product meals there is no equivalent term for mammal “meat by-product meal” — it is called “meat-and-bone-meal.” It may also be referred to by species, such as “beef-and-bone-meal” or “pork-and-bone-meal.”

What is rendering? As defined by Webster’s Dictionary, to render is “to process as for industrial use: to render livestock carcasses and to extract oil from fat, blubber, etc., by melting.” In other words, raw materials are dumped into large vat and boiled for several hours. Rendering separates fat, removes water, and kills bacteria, viruses, parasites, and other organisms. However, the high temperatures used (270°F/130°C) can alter or destroy natural enzymes and proteins found in the raw ingredients.

Because of persistent rumors that rendered by-products contain dead dogs and cats, the FDA conducted a study looking for pentobarbital, the most common euthanasia drug, in pet foods. **They found it.**

Pet Food Company Secrets

Why is commercial pet food dangerous?

The 2007 Menu Foods recall brought to light some of the pet food industry's dirtiest secrets.

Most people were surprised — and appalled — to learn that all Iams/Eukanuba canned foods are not made by The Iams Company at all. In fact, in 2003 Iams signed an exclusive 10-year contract for the production of 100% of its canned foods by Menu.

This type of deal is called “co-packing.” One company makes the food, but puts someone else's label on it. This is a very common arrangement in the pet food industry. It was first illustrated by the Doane's and Diamond recalls, when dozens of private labels were involved. But none were as large or as “reputable” as Iams, Eukanuba, Hill's, Purina, Nutro, and other high-end, so-called “premium” foods.

The big question raised by this arrangement is whether or not there is any real difference between the expensive premium brands and the lowliest generics. The recalled products all contained the suspect ingredient, wheat gluten, but they also all contained by-products of some kind, including specified by-products such as liver or giblets.

Whatever the differences are between cheap and high-end food, one thing is clear. The purchase price of pet food does not always determine whether a pet food is good or bad or even safe. However, the very cheapest foods can be counted on to have the very cheapest ingredients. For example, Ol' Roy, Wal-Mart's store brand, has now been involved in 3 serious recalls.

Animal Testing

Another unpleasant practice exposed by this recall is pet food testing on live animals. Menu's own lab animals, who were deliberately fed the tainted food, were the first known victims. Tests began on February 27 (already a week after the first reports); animals started to die painfully from kidney failure a few days later. After the first media reports, Menu quickly changed its story to call these experiments “taste tests.” But Menu has done live animal feeding, metabolic energy, palatability, and other tests for Iams and other companies for years. Videotapes reveal the animals' lives in barren metal cages; callous treatment; invasive experiments; and careless cruelty. They keep large colonies of dogs and cats for this purpose, or use testing laboratories that have their own animals.

There is a new movement toward using companion animals in their homes for palatability and other studies. In 2006, The Iams Company announced that it was cutting the use of canine and feline lab animals by 70%. While it proclaims this moral victory, the real reasons for this switch are likely financial. Whatever the reasons, it is a very positive step for the animals.

Marketing Magic

A trip down the pet food aisle will boggle the mind with all the wonderful claims made by pet food makers for their repertoire of products. Knowing the nature of the ingredients helps sort out some of the more outrageous claims, but what's the truth behind all this hype?

- **Niche claims.**
Indoor cat, canine athlete, Persian, 7-year old, Bloodhound, or a pet with a tender tummy, too much flab, arthritis, or itchy feet — no matter what, there's a food "designed" just for that pet's personal needs. People like to feel special, and a product with specific appeal is bound to sell better than a general product like "puppy food." The reality is that there are only two basic standards against which all pet foods are measured: adult and growth, which includes gestation and lactation. Everything else is marketing.
- **"Natural" and "Organic" claims.**
Some companies use terms such as "Nature" or "Natural" or even "Organic" in the brand name, whether or not their products fit the definitions. Consumers should also be aware that the term "organic" does not imply anything at all about animal welfare; products from cows and chickens can be organic, yet the animals themselves are still just "production units" in enormous factory farms.
- **Ingredient quality claims.**
A lot of pet foods claim they contain "human grade" ingredients. This is a completely meaningless term — which is why the pet food companies get away with using it. The same applies to "USDA inspected" or similar phrases. The implication is that the food is made using ingredients that are passed by the USDA for human consumption, but there are many ways around this. For instance, a facility might be USDA-inspected during the day, but the pet food is made at night after the inspector goes home.
- **"Meat is the first ingredient" claim.**
A claim that a named meat (chicken, lamb, etc.) is the #1 ingredient is generally seen for dry food. Ingredients are listed on the label by weight, and raw chicken weighs a lot, since contains a lot of water. If you look further down the list, you're likely to see ingredients such as chicken or poultry by-product meal, meat-and-bone meal, corn gluten meal, soybean meal, or other high-protein meal.
- **Special ingredient claims.**
Many of the high-end pet foods today rely on the marketing appeal of people-food ingredients such as fruits, herbs, and vegetables. However, the amounts of these items actually present in the food are small; and the items themselves may be scraps and rejects from processors of human foods — not the whole, fresh ingredients they want you to picture. Such ingredients don't provide a significant health benefit and are really a marketing gimmick.

What Consumers Can Do

- Do not buy pet food that contain ambiguous labeling, meat by-products or chemical additives
- Write or call pet food companies and the Pet Food Institute and express your concerns about commercial pet foods. Demand that manufacturers improve the quality of ingredients in their products.
- Get the facts on <http://specialneedspets.org/animals/index.php/selecting-pet-food/>
- Stop buying commercial pet food; or at least stop buying dry food. Dry foods have been the subject of many more recalls, and have many adverse health effects. If that is not possible, reduce the quantity of commercial pet food and supplement with fresh, organic foods, especially meat. Purchase one or more of the many books available on pet nutrition and make your own food. Be sure that a veterinarian or a nutritionist has checked the recipes to ensure that they are balanced for long-term use.

AAFCO Pet Food Committee

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Dairy and Food Inspection Division
625 Robert Street North
St. Paul, MN 55155-2538
www.aafco.org

FDA — Center for Veterinary Medicine

Sharon Benz
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Rockville, MD 20855
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www.fda.gov/cvm/

Pet Food Institute

2025 M Street, NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036
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202-367-2120 fax

Pet Food Recalls

When things go really wrong and serious problems are discovered in pet food, the company usually works with the FDA to coordinate a recall of the affected products. While many recalls have been widely publicized, quite a few have not.

- In 1995, Nature's Recipe recalled almost a million pounds of dry dog and cat food after consumers complained that their pets were vomiting and losing their appetite. The problem was a fungus that produced vomitoxin contaminating the wheat.
- In 1999, Doane Pet Care recalled more than a million bags of corn-based dry dog food contaminated with aflatoxin. Products included Ol' Roy (Wal-Mart's brand) and 53 other brands. This time, the toxin killed 25 dogs.
- In 2000, Iams recalled 248,000 pounds of dry dog food distributed in 7 states due to excess DL-Methionine Amino Acid, a urinary acidifier.

- In 2003, a recall was made by Petcurean “Go! Natural” pet food due to circumstantial association with some dogs suffering from liver disease; no cause was ever found.
- In late 2005, a similar recall by Diamond Foods was announced; this time the moldy corn contained a particularly nasty fungal product called aflatoxin; 100 dogs died.
- Also in 2005, 123,000 pounds of cat and dog treats were recalled due to *Salmonella* contamination.
- In 2006, more than 5 million cans of Ol’ Roy, American Fare, and other dog foods distributed in the southeast were recalled by the manufacturer, Simmons Pet Food, because the cans’ enamel lining was flaking off into the food.
- Also in 2006, Merrick Pet Care recalled almost 200,000 cans of “Wingalings” dog food when metal tags were found in some samples.
- In the most deadly recall of 2006, 4 prescription canned dog and cat foods were recalled by Royal Canin (owned by Mars). The culprit was a serious overdose of Vitamin D that caused calcium deficiency and kidney disease.
- In February 2007, the FDA issued a warning to consumers not to buy “Wild Kitty,” a frozen food containing raw meat. Routine testing by FDA had revealed *Salmonella* in the food. FDA specifically warned about the potential for illness in humans, not pets. There were no reports of illness or death of any pets, and the food was not recalled.
- In March 2007, the most lethal pet food in history was the subject of the largest recall ever. Menu Foods recalled more than 100 brands including Iams, Eukanuba, Hill’s Science Diet, Purina Mighty Dog, and many store brands including Wal-Mart’s. Thousands of pets were sickened (the FDA received more than 17,000 reports) and an estimated 20% died from acute renal failure caused by the food. Cats were more frequently and more severely affected than dogs. The toxin was initially believed to be a pesticide, the rat poison “aminopterin” in one of the ingredients.



Plants Poisonous to Your Cat

Listed here are plants poisonous to cats that must be avoided if there are cats in your home. **Note that lilies(*), in particular, are dangerous to cats.** While in some cases, just parts of a plant (bark, leaves, seeds, berries, roots, tubers, spouts, green shells) might be poisonous, this list rules out the whole plant. If you must have any of them, keep them safely out of reach. Should your feline friend eat part of a poisonous plant, rush the cat to your veterinarian as soon as possible. If you can, take the plant with you for ease of identification.

Plants Poisonous to Cats

Almond (Pits of)	Elephant Ear	Narcissus
Aloe Vera	Emerald Feather	Needlepoint Ivy
Alocasia	English Ivy	Nephytis
Amaryllis	Eucalyptus	Nightshade
Apple (seeds)	Euonymus	
Apple Leaf Croton	Evergreen	Oleander
Apricot (Pits of)		Onion
Arrowgrass	Ferns	Oriental Lily *
Asparagus Fern	Fiddle-leaf fig	
Autumn Crocus	Florida Beauty	Peace Lily
Avacado (fruit and pit)	Flax	Peach (pits and wilting leaves)
Azalea	Four O'Clock	Pencil Cactus
	Foxglove	Peony
Baby's Breath	Fruit Salad Plant	Periwinkle
Baneberry		Philodendron
Bayonet	Geranium	Pimpernel
Beargrass	German Ivy	Plumosa Fern
Beech	Giant Dumb Cane	Poinciana
Belladonna	Glacier IvyGolden Chain	Poinsettia (low toxicity)
Bird of Paradise	Gold Dieffenbachia	Poison Hemlock
Bittersweet	Gold Dust Dracaena	Poison Ivy
Black-eyed Susan	Golden Glow	Poison Oak
Black Locust	Golden Pothos	Pokeweed
Bleeding Heart		
Bloodroot		

Bluebonnet	Gopher Purge	Poppy
Box		Potato
Boxwood	Hahn's Self-Branching	Pothos
Branching Ivy	Ivy	Precatory Bean
Buckeyes	Heartland	Primrose
Buddist Pine	Philodendron	Privet, Common
Burning Bush	Hellebore	
Buttercup	Hemlock, Poison	Red Emerald
	Hemlock, Water	Red Princess
Cactus, Candelabra	Henbane	Red-Margined
Caladium	Holly	Dracaena
Calla Lily	Honeysuckle	Rhododendron
Castor Bean	Horsebeans	Rhubarb
Ceriman	Horsebrush	Ribbon Plant
Charming	Horse Chestnuts	Rosemary Pea
Dieffenbachia	Hurricane Plant	Rubber Plant
Cherry (pits, seeds & wilting leaves)	Hyacinth	
Cherry, most wild varieties	Hydrangea	Saddle Leaf
Cherry, ground	Indian Rubber Plant	Philodendron
Cherry, Laurel	Indian Tobacco	Sago Palm
Chinaberry	Iris	Satin Pothos
Chinese Evergreen	Iris Ivy	Schefflera
Christmas Rose		Scotch Broom
Chrysanthemum	Jack in the Pulpit	Silver Pothos
Cineria	Janet Craig Dracaena	Skunk Cabbage
Clematis	Japanese Show Lily *	Snowdrops
Cordatum	Java Beans	Snow on the Mountain
Coriaria	Jessamine	Spotted Dumb Cane
Cornflower	Jerusalem Cherry	Staggerweed
Corn Plant	Jimson Weed	Star of Bethlehem
Cornstalk Plant	Jonquil	String of Pearls
Croton	Jungle Trumpets	Striped Dracaena
Corydalis		Sweetheart Ivy
Crocus, Autumn	Kalanchoe	Sweetpea
Crown of Thorns		Swiss Cheese plant
Cuban Laurel	Lacy Tree	
Cutleaf Philodendron	Philodendron	Tansy Mustard
Cycads	Lantana	Taro Vine
Cyclamen	Larkspur	Tiger Lily *
	Laurel	Tobacco
Daffodil	Lily	Tomato Plant (green fruit, stem and leaves)
Daphne	Lily Spider	Tree Philodendron
Datura	Lily of the Valley	Tropic Snow
Deadly Nightshade	Locoweed	Dieffenbachia
Death Camas	Lupine	Tulip

Devil's Ivy
Delphinium
Decentrea
Dieffenbachia
Dracaena Palm
Dragon Tree
Dumb Cane

Easter Lily *
Eggplant
Elaine
Elderberry

Madagascar Dragon
Tree
Marble Queen
Marigold
Marijuana
Mescal Bean
Mexican Breadfruit
Miniature Croton
Mistletoe
Mock Orange
Monkshood
Moonseed
Morning Glory
Mother-in Law's
Tongue
Morning Glory
Mountain Laurel
Mushrooms

Tung Tree
Virginia Creeper

Water Hemlock
Weeping Fig
Wild Call
Wisteria

Yews --
e.g. Japanese Yew
English Yew
Western Yew
American Yew

Feline behavioral problems



Cats are sensitive, emotional animals. They react to their environment, their owners and circumstances they are surrounded with. Pay close attention if any of the below mentioned issues occur and try to resolve it first and foremost by identifying the cause. Cheapest and most effective cure for all cat behaviors – love. Love your cat, don't be afraid to show it and they will respond by altering their behavior.

Animal that is exhibiting behavioral problems should be treated as an animal with trauma. It is often difficult to see behind those foreboding looks, body language that warns you off and cries that send clear message animal does not want to be handled. But underneath that façade, that self imposed protection, lays insecure, scared, craving for love creature. Placing an animal in a safe environment will not immediately make it break out of its shell, and suddenly start loving life. They have been tricked before and their highly evolved intuition is making them cautious.

Give your pet time to adjust to a new home. Let them discover it at their own pace, find comforting spot they will feel safe in, show them there are no dangers or predators. They will be careful at first, but as the time goes by, their qualms settle and more inquisitive nature will start showing.



Early influences on behavior

Your cat has spent some time in a shelter; it has socialized with other cats, was fed, nourished, loved and played with. So he/she should be well adapted to your home as well. However, any sudden change in location can send intimidating signals to the cat that it is being ripped out of its protective environment. Give the animal time to adjust and most importantly show them affection. Once they realize they are safe they will relax and gladly start exploring their new home.

Whether they are kittens, just weaned away from their mother, or abandoned and then nursed at the shelter, adult or senior cats – coming to a new environment can be stressful.

Inappropriate experiences include: Aggression (towards people and/or other cats), fearfulness, inappropriate play, elimination (inappropriate urination and/or defecation), chewing, scratching, predatory behavior.



Kittens 5 to 6 weeks old can urinate and defecate independent of maternal stimulation. Some cats cover feces and urine...some do not. This behavior is determined both by individual preference (etiology unclear), whether marking to delineate territorial boundaries or, in core territory elimination areas, to establish or maintain dominance within a group of cats. Submissive cats within a group are more likely to cover their waste. Marking...may be of the spraying or non-spraying varieties. **Spraying** of urine (cat assumes a posture that directs the urine stream horizontally) is to establish an olfactory signal of an individual's presence. (Cats can distinguish specific urine odors of other individual cats. Their sense of smell rivals that of the dog.). Spraying is a socially mediated behavior that, strangely, may be quite common among individual animals of a lower status (as well as a characteristic of the bolder, confident cat); this refers to an animal who perceives a (real or unreal) threat or inability to control his interaction with other members of the group or other neighboring group. **Non-Spraying** marking involves simply urinating or defecating (assuming the normal posture for these functions) in one or many "inappropriate" locations. Like spraying, non-spraying marking serves to establish one's presence.

Inappropriate elimination

Inappropriate elimination (urination and defecation) ranks as the most frequently presented feline behavioral problem. Sadly, failure to diagnose and to treat the underlying cause(s) frequently leads to a request for euthanasia. It is important to determine inappropriate elimination that is truly behavioral...as apposed to physiological or medical.

Location aversion

- The location of the litter box may become unacceptable to a cat. **Noises** (washer, dryer, water pipes sounds, water-heaters and furnaces clicking on or off, or endless encounters with country or rap music); **smells** (mustiness) or **fear** (of other animals, toddlers, intimidating circumstances) are usually at fault. However, in some circumstances, there may be **an underlying medical issue**, e.g. the litter box is located up or down stairs which are difficult, painful or uncomfortable to traverse
- Where an alternative area is not available, a cat may eliminate next to or sometimes in the litter box. If an alternative location is accessible, the cat may then experiment with an alternative "substrate" (e.g. carpeting)

Move the same litter type and litter box to an acceptable (to the cat) area and most likely you cat will readily start using its litter box!

1. if the cat does NOT use the litter box but DOES eliminate next to the box, then test other locations for the litter box.
2. In households with multiple cats this particular aversion might be more evident. Provide separate litter boxes and distinction between locations
3. Urge your cats by repetitive instructions where it is appropriate to perform elimination

Marking the territory

Marking by elimination is a normal feline social activity and as such, an effective means to define and delineate their presence and territorial claims. For most pet cats, the need to mark territory is minimal or non-existent, in comparison to the need in wild cats which must compete amongst themselves. However even in the pet cat, marking occurs and can be a result of stress (sometimes due to newcomer) or fear.

Treatment

It is always appropriate and essential to remove the odor, which can otherwise act as an elimination stimulus and frustrate the overall treatment approach. If carpeting is affected, then the carpet, pad and sub-flooring need to be thoroughly washed and deodorized. There are several safe, biodegradable products that are enzyme based which can be purchased from vet's offices or pet stores.

Timely "intervention"--that is when a cat is exhibiting premonitory behavior indicating impending inappropriate elimination such as: change in facial expression, sniffing, scratching, spinning in circles – react by implying a startle effect – clap, whistle, hiss to interrupt this behavior. It is essential that the startle intervention occur during or within 30-60 seconds of the elimination sequence. It is of NO VALUE to act anytime after this period!

3. Pharmacological Intervention:

When the cause of spraying/markings is diagnosed *early* and appropriate modification in the physical and behavioral environments are quickly instituted, as described above, no additional intervention is usually required. In some instances, however, there is a need for concurrent use of drugs along with behavioral/environmental modification approaches. Drugs most frequently employed by veterinarians belong to one of four classes: 1. [Benzodiazepines](#); 2. [Butyrophenones](#); 3. [Tricyclic Antidepressants](#); 4. [Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors](#).

Please keep in mind all of these medication cause certain side-effects and thorough examination of the situation is advised before resorting to using them. They change the chemical structure of your cat's behavior pattern and can form dependency as a way to keep the certain behavior in check. While it sounds effective it can be detrimental to the cat's health (may cause depression, listlessness) and can be quite expensive.

Scratching

Cat owners frequently encounter dreaded furniture scratching and wonder where is that behavior coming from. It is within cat's instinct to scratch. It's very much a need. They scratch to stretch, to remove sheaths from their claws, to delineate their territory, to relieve stress... there are many reasons but please note they DO NOT do it to make you angry. Yell at a cat when it scratches your sofa and it will give you a puzzled look. They are very capable of knowing when they are doing something wrong (like spraying) but scratching to cats is like nail filing for women. We all just need appropriate tools for it. Cats will gladly use scratch posts if you provide them with one. It is an innate behavior and they need to fulfill it, so please provide them with appropriate toys. I prefer using both scratch posts and pads. My cats seem to like both but for different things. Scratch pads are used mostly when they want to remove sheaths from their claws while they use the post when they want to stretch or just be playful and blow off some steam.

I once brought home, not one but two stray cats, one of which was feral. And to my amazement not only did they use the litter box when needed but they instinctively used the scratch pad/post to satisfy their scratching needs. To entice them to use it, I resorted to safe little cheat – I sprinkled cat nip on the scratch pad and let them discover it. There is something especially funny about a cat trying to scratch and cuddle at the same time with a scratch pad. Try it, fun guaranteed.

Aggression

Play Aggression:

If a kitten fails to learn to temper aggressive "playfulness" (i.e. to retract its claws or inhibit its bite during play) from the queen, it may justifiably receive more than one "unnecessary roughness" penalty by the owner/scorer/victim. Premonitory signs of play aggression are important to recognize in order to modify the occurrence and the severity. These include:

1. flattening of the ears against the head
2. twitching of the tail
3. unsheathing of the claws
4. It is interesting that some of the more worrisome play-aggression postures may actually bear unnerving similarity to those of fear aggression
5. Behavioral modification of unacceptable play-aggression involves "startling" the kitten early in the sequence of premonitory signals that indicate impending inappropriate rough, aggressive play. When a suitable response to such counter conditioning is achieved, then follow it with gentle petting and treats...hopefully to encourage more play activity that is appropriately gentle and subdued.

Fear Aggression

Fear...and the flight-or-flight response to it...is an ingrained and potent (over)response by our feline friends to a multitude of often benign and though occasionally dangerous situations. It is the power of fear and its response... to flee or to

hide from a perceived danger... that has, in fact, been in large part responsible for preservation of cat species in general. The run, they hide...and they survive. (It therefore follows, at least from the cats' point of view, that running or hiding "works" .). It is not, therefore, so surprising to appreciate that when the flight response (to fear)...the fleeing and the running...does not provide the safe environment for which it was designed, then the secondary aspect of fear...the fight component (dubbed by this author as "Adrenaline-Dread)... is invoked. The result is fear aggression. All cats (even so-called fully "socialized", "friendly" cats) are capable of expressing such aggression, though the trigger of such behavior depends on the individual's fear sensitivity threshold. So long as a cat perceives an unavoidable threat to itself, it becomes aggressive. All this can be summarized in the following two statements:

- Ordinarily a fearful cat will flee or hide from a perceived danger
- If a cat...any cat...is placed in circumstances of shrinking space (backed into a corner; no escape route), it will assume a defensive attack posture
- You will notice flattening of the ears against the head
- Crouching, with the head drawn close to the body
- Rolling on the back (this is NOT a submissive posture!!!)

At this point, with even mild provocation, the cat will strike with both its front claws, which it will use to grasp and hold it's victim while savagely biting; concurrently there will be vicious scratching with purpose, using its rear claws. There is much vocalization (cat AND victim) during such attacks.

Treatment - It is best to eliminate the source of fear (another animal, a child, a noise). Once the threat is eliminated cat will stop exhibiting signs of aggression. Reassure the pet it is loved. Only sense of security will prevent cat from feeling the need to defend itself.

Predatory Aggression:

- **Predatory Behavior:**
 - Occurs in cats regardless of whether or not hunger is present
 - Involves killing of natural prey without eating (just beheading, usually)
 - Is "normal" in some cats, usually develops by 5-7 weeks of age.
 - Involves inappropriate predatory behavior towards natural and "unnatural" prey (e.g. human infants!)
 - Hallmarks of this type of behavior are: Stealth/Silence, heightened attentiveness, slinking posture, tail-twitching, pouncing...if the victim suddenly moves
- **Treatment:**
 - Keep your cat indoors – this is probably the safest and most effective way in steering your cat from predatory behavior
 - Startle – clap, whistle, shout
 - Avoid activity that stimulates predatory aggression towards human (exercise strict caution around infants and small children)
 - Apply loud bell to collar (to warn prey and point the position of the cat at any time).

Surviving the Feline Teens



As your cat matures from kittenhood to adolescence, behavior once giggled over may now be seen as obnoxious. A less tolerant owner might begin to search for another home for Fluffy Sue and Tigger. This age calls for a little understanding. Perhaps looking at your cat's behavior through his eyes will provide you with that very comprehension.

I. SPRAYING

Hormones! The bane to any parent's existence whether you be parent to cats or kids — or both. As a young male feline matures, he feels the need to mark off his territory and let his competition know about it. This is done by sashaying up to a vertical surface, hiking up his tail and letting loose with a spray of urine and possibly, anal sac secretions. This usually happens at the stage his urine is beginning to smell all grown up, smelling more like the urine of cheetahs rather than chinchilla Persians.

The solution to a spraying Tom, Dick or Harry is a simple one: neuter immediately and there is a 90% chance that he will never spray again. The older the cat, the longer he has been spraying; so there is less chance that neutering alone will make it all go away. If he — or in rare cases, she — is still spraying, more drastic measures are called for: blocking outdoor views, behavior modification, re-homing additional cats, drug therapy, and other veterinary procedures. All because he doesn't want other cats in his territory! Better yet neuter him before puberty (between two and six months) and you are virtually guaranteed to avoid spraying.

II. ESTRUS

Has your female cat become smotheringly affectionate while purring, "Hey sailor, new in town?" If she is between five and ten months old, chances are she has gone into her first heat (estrus). She will yowl, roll about the floor and rub all over anything available for approximately 10 -14 days. She may also urinate around the house in her attempt to advertise for mates.

For you – the solution is simple- your cat has already been spayed/neutered ☺ Rejoice!

III. SCRATCHING

What's an owner to do? First, trim the cat's nails every two to three weeks to keep them relatively blunt. Second, provide a scratching post covered with a rough material (sisal is ideal but rope, starched burlap, or natural bark also suffices) that is at least three feet tall with a wide, sturdy base that won't tip over even when climbed or "attacked" by the cat. A short or unsteady post will be of no use to a cat and will be rejected in favor of non-tip furniture. Keep the post interesting by sprinkling it with catnip every couple of weeks. Draw the cat's attention to the post by playing interactive games around the post with the cat. Place it near your feline's favorite resting place for the urge to scratch is strongest upon awakening. Place another one in front of whatever "sign post" he already scratches, after a month of scratching the cat post rather than the furniture, you can move it an inch a day to a more convenient location.

Don't think that declawing will be the answer to your prayers. Anecdotally, some believe this surgical amputation can shake your cat's confidence to the point that he may stop using the litter box, become biter or start hiding in dark out-of-the-way places to avoid social interactions. Behavior changes aside, it is a painful surgery that is a drastic, painful, irreversible solution and should not be considered if you are an animal lover.

IV. NOCTURNAL BEHAVIOR

Did your cat keep you up last night? Contrary to popular belief, cats are not nocturnal creatures the way bats and raccoons are, but latchkey adolescents have been known to get restless, usually near dawn. When cats hunt, they stalk, pounce, kill and then eat their prey. Replicating this predatory ritual by playing interactive games and then serving dinner can be tremendously satisfying for your cat. A 10 minute play session followed by a fashionably late dinner does wonders for an early rising youngster.

Make sure you are not inadvertently teaching your cat any bad habits. If he cries loud and long and you get up to (a) feed him, (b) play with him, (c) cuddle with him, or (d) all of the above, he will be rewarded for his bad behavior and will repeat the annoying behavior over and over. Do not give in to his commands. Play possum. Draw the covers up over your head and ignore his demands. A behavior that is not rewarded will eventually extinguish.

During this stage of rambunctious high energy, willful excessive playfulness and boundary testing; patience, a sense of humor and a sound understanding of feline adolescent behavior are the best weapons.

The Alpha Cat Syndrome



Cats are supposed to be warm and friendly creatures, seeking owner approval, petting and cuddles and purring their way through peaceful evenings at home. But not all cats are this amiable or this compliant. Some have an agenda of their own and seemingly refuse to take no for an answer. These are "alpha cats." They are natural leaders; they refuse to be led and attempt to take charge of practically every situation. These cats like their food when they want it and the way that they like it ... or else. They may only let you touch them for short periods of time and then again, only on their terms. They rebel when admonished and demand attention, access, and assets - when the mood so takes them. You don't own an alpha cat – he owns you, or at least, he thinks he does.

When alphas don't get their own way, they bully and pressure you into immediate action. They may bite your nose or toes to get you out of bed in the morning. They may shriek their demands for food until you are forced to give in. They may growl if approached while eating and some are protective of their toys and naptime. And watch out if you try to pick up your alpha cat or pet him when he's not in the mood. He may bite or claw his negative message to you in no uncertain terms.

Perhaps the most classical component of the alpha cat syndrome is petting-induced aggression. Alphas will jump up on your lap and allow themselves to be petted – but only for a short while. And when they've had enough, they narrow their eyes, glance sideways at the petting hand, and their tail begins to switch from side to side. This is the writing on the wall that heralds an imminent meltdown: Suddenly he'll swat, bite, and maybe roll onto his side so he can attack you with all five sharp points simultaneously.

What to do? In essence, they must be shown who calls the shots, who is really charge, and who is the supplier of all good things. Then and only then will their bossiness be honed into acceptance and respect. The name of the behavior modification program is "Nothing in Life is Free." It is a non-confrontational "tough love" leadership program in which the cat is required to earn all valued assets from the owner. A prerequisite is a modicum of training so that the cat can be called upon to carry out some task before being issued certain resources.

Nothing in Life is Free

Avoid all confrontations. Make a list of situations and things you do that cause your cat to become aggressive and conscientiously avoid these situations. If your cat bites you to make you get out of bed, shut him out of the bedroom at night. If your cat bites you when he is on your lap and you are petting him, do not allow him onto your lap for a while until he has learned some manners. Also, learn to read the warning signs and ration your petting.

Training. Despite popular opinion, it is quite possible to train a cat to respond on cue. The best way to accomplish this is with click and treat training. Clicker training basically involves three steps.

Step One Teaching the cat that the click of a plastic "frog" or clicker heralds the arrival of delicious food treat.

Step Two The cat learns that he can make the clicker click by performing certain actions.

Step Three The cat is rewarded with a click and a food treat only if he performs an action after being cued.

No free lunch— Feed your cat twice daily so that you control when he gets fed. At mealtime a cat should be hungry. Have him SIT before you click and put down the food bowl. The meal becomes the reward. No SIT = no food that mealtime. If the cat knows how to SIT on cue this request is perfectly fair. If he ends up missing a meal or two this will sharpen his appetite and thus the likelihood that he will respond as directed the next time.

Working for petting. Petting should be rationed to keep your cat hungry for your attention. Petting and attention are supplied only when the cat does something to deserve them, like responding to a voice cue or hand signal. This is particularly advisable if petting-induced aggression is a feature of your cat's aggressive repertoire. Even if your cat has performed well enough to deserve petting, be cognizant of a deteriorating situation. Furtive sideways glances and a twitching tail mean that it is time to quit.

Put your cat's toys away and supply them only when he has done something to deserve them. Allow the cat free access to the toy until he loses interest and then pick it up and replace it in the toy chest (or drawer).

Never respond to attention seeking(demanding) behavior. Act dumb. Walk away. Disappear. Deliver what the cat wants later, on your terms, and only in response to the successful accomplishment of an assigned task like sitting, coming when called, or waiting patiently.

Fire engine service If your cat starts trying to bite you or acts aggressively in any way, remove yourself from his presence for a few hours (turn, walk away, and leave the cat alone) or herd the cat into another room for time out.

Feline Leukemia Virus



What is feline leukemia virus?

Feline leukemia virus (FeLV), a retrovirus, so named because of the way it behaves within infected cells. All retroviruses, including feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), produce an enzyme, reverse transcriptase, which permits them to insert copies of their own genetic material into that of the cells they have infected. Although related, FeLV and FIV differ in many ways, including their shape: FeLV is more circular while FIV is elongated. The two viruses are also quite different genetically, and their protein constituents are dissimilar in size and composition. Although many of the diseases caused by FeLV and FIV are similar, the specific ways in which they are caused differs.

How common is the infection?

FeLV-infected cats are found worldwide, but the prevalence of infection varies greatly depending on their age, health, environment, and lifestyle. In the United States, approximately 2 to 3% of all cats are infected with FeLV.

How is FeLV spread?

Cats persistently infected with FeLV serve as sources of infection. Virus is shed in very high quantities in saliva and nasal secretions, but also in urine, feces, and milk from infected cats. Cat-to-cat transfer of virus may occur from a bite wound, during mutual grooming, and (though rarely) through the shared use of litter boxes and feeding dishes. Transmission can also take place from an infected mother cat to her kittens.

What cats are at greatest risk of infection?

Cats at greatest risk of infection are those that may be exposed to infected cats, either via prolonged close contact or through bite wounds. Such cats include: cats living with infected cats or with cats of unknown infection status, cats allowed outdoors unsupervised where they may be bitten by an infected cat, kittens born to infected mothers

What are the signs of disease caused by FeLV?

During the early stages of infection, it is common for cats to exhibit no signs of disease at all. However, over time—weeks, months, or even years—the cat's health may progressively deteriorate or be characterized by recurrent illness interspersed with periods of relative health. Signs can include:

- Loss of appetite
- Slow but progressive weight loss, followed by severe wasting late in the disease process
- Poor coat condition
- Enlarged lymph nodes
- Persistent fever
- Pale gums and other mucus membranes
- Inflammation of the gums (gingivitis) and mouth (stomatitis)
- Infections of the skin, urinary bladder, and upper respiratory tract
- Persistent diarrhea
- Seizures, behavior changes, and other neurological disorders
- A variety of eye conditions
- In unsprayed female cats, abortion of kittens or other reproductive failures

I understand there are two stages of FeLV infection. What are they?

FeLV is present in the blood (a condition called viremia) during two different stages of infection: **Primary viremia**, an early stage of virus infection. During this stage some cats are able to mount an effective immune response, eliminate the virus from the bloodstream, and halt progression to the secondary viremia stage. **Secondary viremia**, a later stage characterized by persistent infection of the bone marrow and other tissue. If FeLV infection progresses to this stage it has passed a point of no return: the overwhelming majority of cats with secondary viremia will be infected for the remainder of their lives.

How is infection diagnosed?

Two types of FeLV blood tests are in common use. Both detect a protein component of the virus as it circulates in the bloodstream. **ELISA** (enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay) and similar tests can be performed in your veterinarian's office. ELISA-type tests detect both primary and secondary stages of viremia. **IFA** (indirect immunofluorescent antibody assay) tests must be sent out to a diagnostic laboratory. IFA tests detect secondary viremia only, so the majority of positive-testing cats remain infected for life.

How can I keep my cat from becoming infected?

The only sure way to protect cats is to prevent their exposure to FeLV-infected cats.

- Keep cats indoors, away from potentially infected cats that might bite them. If you do allow your cats outdoor access, provide supervision or place them in a secure enclosure to prevent wandering and fighting.
- Adopt only infection-free cats into households with uninfected cats.
- House infection-free cats separately from infected cats, and don't allow infected cats to share food and water bowls or litter boxes with uninfected cats.

- Consider FeLV vaccination of uninfected cats. (FeLV vaccination of infected cats is not beneficial.) Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of vaccination with your veterinarian.

I just discovered that one of my cats has FeLV, yet I have other cats as well. What should I do?

Unfortunately, many FeLV-infected cats are not diagnosed until after they have lived with other cats. In such cases, all other cats in the household should be tested for FeLV. Ideally, infected and non-infected cats should then be separated to eliminate the potential for FeLV transmission.

How should FeLV-infected cats be managed?

- Confine FeLV-infected cats indoors to reduce their exposure to other infectious agents carried by animals, and to prevent the spread of infection to other cats in the neighborhood.
- Spay or neuter FeLV-infected cats.
- Feed nutritionally complete and balanced diets.
- Avoid uncooked food, such as raw meat and eggs, and unpasteurized dairy products because the risk of food-borne bacterial and parasitic infections is much higher in immunosuppressed cats.
- Schedule wellness visits with your veterinarian at least once every six months.
- Closely monitor the health and behavior of your FeLV-infected cat. Alert your veterinarian to any changes in your cat's health immediately.

How long can I expect my FeLV-infected cat to live?

It is impossible to accurately predict the life expectancy of a cat infected with FeLV. With appropriate care and under ideal conditions, infected cats can remain in apparent good health for many months, although most succumb to a FeLV-related disease within two or three years after becoming infected. If your cat has already experienced one or more severe illnesses as a result of FeLV infection, or if persistent fever, weight loss, or cancer is present, a much shorter survival time can be expected.

Can people become infected with FeLV?

Epidemiological and laboratory studies have failed to provide evidence that FeLV can be transmitted from infected cats to humans. Regardless, FeLV-infected cats may carry other diseases. At greatest risk of infection are elderly or immunosuppressed people (e.g., those with AIDS, or receiving immunosuppressive medications such as chemotherapy), infants, and unborn children. It is recommended that pregnant women, people with suppressed immune systems, the very young, and the very old avoid contact with FeLV-infected cats.

Feline Infectious Peritonitis



What is FIP?

Feline infectious peritonitis (FIP) is a viral disease of cats caused by certain strains of a virus called the feline coronavirus. Most strains of feline coronavirus are avirulent, which means that they do not cause disease, and are referred to as feline enteric coronavirus. Cats infected with a feline coronavirus generally do not show any symptoms during the initial viral infection, and an immune response occurs with the development of antiviral antibodies. In a small percent of infected cats (5 to 10 percent), either by a mutation of the virus or by an aberration of the immune response, the infection progresses into clinical FIP. The virus is then referred to as feline infectious peritonitis virus (FIPV). With the assistance of the antibodies that are supposed to protect the cat, white blood cells are infected with virus, and these cells then transport the virus throughout the cat's body. An intense inflammatory reaction occurs around vessels in the tissues where these infected cells locate, often in the abdomen, kidney, or brain. It is this interaction between the body's own immune system and the virus that is responsible for the disease. Once a cat develops clinical FIP involving one or many systems of the cat's body, the disease is progressive and is almost always fatal. The way clinical FIP develops as an immune-mediated disease is unique, unlike any other viral disease of animals or humans.

Is my cat at risk for developing FIP?

Any cat that carries any coronavirus is potentially at risk for developing FIP. However, cats with weak immune systems are most likely to develop the disease, including kittens, cats already infected with feline leukemia virus (FeLV), and geriatric cats. Most cats that develop FIP are under two years of age, but cats of any age may develop the disease.

FIP is not a highly contagious disease, since by the time the cat develops clinical disease only a small amount of virus is being shed. Feline coronavirus can be found in large quantities in the saliva and feces of cats during the acute infection, and to a lesser extent in recovered or carrier cats, so it can be transmitted through cat-to-cat contact and exposure to feces. The virus can also live in the environment for several weeks. The most common transmission of feline coronavirus occurs when infected female cats pass along the virus to their kittens, usually when the kittens are between five and eight weeks of age. FIP is relatively uncommon in the general cat population. However, the disease rate is much higher in multiple-cat populations, such as some shelters and catteries. FIP has

also been shown to be more common in certain breeds, but the research is still unclear as to whether these breeds are more susceptible because of their genetics or whether they are exposed to feline coronavirus more often because many of them come from catteries.

What are the symptoms of FIP?

Some cats may show mild upper respiratory symptoms such as sneezing, watery eyes, and nasal discharge. Other cats may experience a mild intestinal disease and show symptoms such as diarrhea. Only a small percentage of cats that are exposed to the feline coronavirus develop FIP-and this can occur weeks, months, or even years after initial exposure.

In cats that develop FIP, the symptoms can appear to be sudden since cats have an amazing ability to mask disease until they are in a crisis state. Once symptoms develop, often there is increasing severity over the course of several weeks, ending in death. Generally, these cats first develop nonspecific symptoms such as loss of appetite, weight loss, depression, rough hair coat, and fever.

FIP can be difficult to diagnose because each cat can display different symptoms that are similar to those of many other diseases.

Can my cat be tested for FIP?

One of the most difficult aspects of FIP is that there is no simple diagnostic test. The ELISA, IFA, and virus-neutralization tests detect the presence of coronavirus antibodies in a cat, but these tests cannot differentiate between the various strains of feline coronavirus. A positive result means only that the cat has had a prior exposure to coronavirus, but not necessarily one that causes FIP.

To date, there is no way to screen healthy cats for the risk of developing FIP, and the only way to definitively diagnose FIP is by biopsy, or examination of tissues at autopsy. Generally, veterinarians may rely on a presumptive diagnosis, which can be made with a relatively high degree of confidence by evaluation of the cat's history, presenting symptoms, examination of fluid if it is present, and the results of supporting laboratory tests including a positive coronavirus antibody titer.

Can FIP be treated?

Unfortunately, there is no known cure or effective treatment for FIP at this time. Some treatments may induce short-term remissions in a small percentage of cats; however, FIP is a fatal disease. Treatment is generally aimed at supportive care, such as good nursing care and nutrition, and alleviating the inflammatory response of the disease. Cats with FIP are often treated with corticosteroids, cytotoxic drugs, and antibiotics. Supportive care may also include fluid therapy, draining accumulated fluids, and blood transfusions.

Can I protect my cat from getting FIP?

In multiple cat environments, keeping cats as healthy as possible and minimizing exposure to infectious agents decreases the likelihood of cats developing FIP. Litter boxes should be kept clean and located away from food and water dishes. Litter should be cleansed of feces daily, and the box should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected regularly. Newly acquired cats and any cats that are suspected of being infected should be separated from other cats. Preventing overcrowding, keeping cats current on vaccinations, and providing proper nutrition can also help decrease the occurrence of FIP in groups of cats.

And keep your cat indoors.

Feline ringworms

What is ringworm?

Ringworm is the most common fungal skin infection seen in cats. Contrary to the name, ringworm is caused by a microscopic group of parasitic fungal organisms known as dermatophytes (which means "plants that live on the skin"). Ringworm invades the dead, outer layers of the skin, claws & hair.

Are there different types of dermatophytes?

Yes there are. In cats, there are three most common types of dermatophytes which may cause ringworm: *Microsporum gypseum* (*M. gypseum*)- This species of ringworm is usually from dogs and cats that dig into contaminated soil. *Microsporum canis* (*M. Canis*) - The source of this species of ringworm is almost always a cat & accounts for approximately 75 - 98% of ringworm seen in cats. *Trichophyton mentagrophytes* - This species infects dogs and cats when they are exposed to rodents or the burrows they live in.

Are certain cats more susceptible than others?

Ringworm is more common in younger cats (under 12 months of age). This may be due to the fact that their immune systems haven't matured fully. Immunocompromised (such as those with FIV) are also more vulnerable to ringworm. Longhaired cats are also more likely to have ringworm than shorthaired cats, as are cats under stress.

Is ringworm contagious?

Yes. *Microsporum canis* in particular is highly infectious. It can be passed from cat to cat, dog to cat, cat to dog, cat to human, human to cat etc.

How does a cat become infected with ringworm?

A cat can become infected with ringworm either by direct exposure with an infected animal or via the environment, such as contaminated bedding, grooming equipment, carpet & furniture. The spores are attached to the hairs, which are shed into the environment & can remain infective for up to 13 months.

How do I know if my cat has ringworm?

The most recognized sign your cat is infected with ringworm is circular patches of hair loss, especially around the head & limbs (although it can occur on other parts of the body also). Other signs are grey, patchy areas of baldness, with or without redness & itching, seborrhea sicca (a type of dandruff), dry/flaky skin, onychomycosis (infection of the claw & claw bed).



How is ringworm diagnosed?

There are several ways to diagnose a ringworm but we recommend that you seek the advice and help of a vet if you suspect your cat has ringworm.

What are the treatments for ringworm?

Once your cat has been diagnosed with ringworm you will have to treat both the cat & the environment. If you live in a multiple cat household, all cats in your home will need to be treated. Carefully follow the instructions on the packet & or by your veterinarian when treating your cat. In healthy cats, ringworm will often resolve itself in 2 - 4 months. However, it is recommended you treat your cat for ringworm to speed up the process & prevent infection of humans & other pets.

Shampoos/Dips: Lime sulfur dips are the most effective. Sometimes clipping the cat (especially longhaired cats) is recommended to increase the effectiveness of treatment & also decrease environmental contamination. The cat must not be allowed to lick it's coat before it dries as this can cause vomiting. Bathing should be done every 4 - 6 days for approximately 2 - 4 weeks. Lime sulfur dips can cause yellowing of the coat, this however will fade in time.

Griseofulvin (Fulvicin®): This is the most commonly used anti-fungal drug & the only anti-fungal drug licensed for use in the cat. Griseofulvin inhibits fungal cell wall division by altering the structure and function of the microtubules. This allows the cat's immune system to gain control & fight off the infection.

Other drugs which may be used to treat ringworm include: Ketoconazole (Nizoral®), Itraconazole, Terbinafine - (Lamisil ®). Speak to your veterinarian for further information.

Ringworm Vaccine: There is a ringworm vaccine made by Fort Dodge called Fel-O-Vax® MC-K. This vaccine must be given to health cats over 4 months of age, and is a course of 3 injections. This vaccine is only effective for *M. Canis*. After an initial dose is administered a second dose is given 12-16 days later. A third dose is given 26-30 days after the second dose.

Decontaminating the Environment: Vacuum daily & where possible throw out the vacuum cleaner bag. Diluted bleach (1 part bleach to 10 parts water) may be used to clean down surfaces, grooming equipment etc. Carpets & soft furnishings should be steam cleaned. Bedding & kennels will also need to be disinfected.

Can I catch ringworm from my cat?

Yes, it is possible for humans to catch ringworm from cats & vice versa. Below is a photo of ringworm.



Please note:

The medical articles on this site have not been written by a veterinarian & should not be considered a replacement for a veterinarian visit. The articles are provided for informative purposes only.

Always seek immediate veterinary advice for any problems (health or behavioral) in your pets.

While great care has been made in the creation of these articles, we cannot guarantee the accuracy or omissions on these pages. If in any doubt whatsoever, seek professional medical advice.

Feline gingivitis and stomatitis

Cats are prone to chronic diseases of the mouth including gingivitis (inflammation of the gums) and stomatitis (inflammation of the oral [mucous membranes](#), usually the back of the mouth). The disease may also be known as 'feline gingivostomatitis.' The primary feature of this disease is severe inflammation of the gums where they touch the teeth.

What causes gingivitis and stomatitis in cats?

There are probably a number of factors that contribute to the development of this chronic [inflammation](#) in the mouth and gums. Although the exact cause is unknown, it is primarily thought that some cats may have a hypersensitivity or allergic reaction to bacterial [plaque](#) and are called 'plaque-intolerant.' This results in a disease called lymphocytic-plasmacytic gingivitis stomatitis (LPGS), which affects the entire mouth. In this disease, certain cells involved in the [immune system](#) called [lymphocytes](#) and plasma cells move into the [tissues](#) of the mouth and we see severe inflammation where the tooth meets the gumline. It is this disease which we will focus on in this article.

Are some cats more susceptible?

Some researchers feel certain purebred breeds such as Siamese are more prone to this disease, while others feel it is more common in domestic shorthair cats.

Sometimes this disease can develop when the cat is very young. This is called a 'juvenile onset' form of disease. It may occur at 3-5 months when the permanent teeth are erupting and become more severe by 9 months of age. Cats who are immunosuppressed have a greater tendency to have oral infections which may become chronic.

What are the signs of chronic gingivitis and stomatitis?

Chronic gingivitis and stomatitis can cause severe pain. The animal's behavior may change - irritability, aggressiveness, depression or reclusiveness may be seen. The cat may drool excessively, have difficulty eating or not eat at all. Some cats will go up to the dish as though they are very hungry (which they are) and then run from the food dish because eating is so painful. They will often have bad breath (halitosis) and may not be grooming themselves adequately. Their gums bleed very easily.

How is this disease diagnosed?

During the physical exam, which may need to be done under anesthesia to do it well, multiple lesions are seen. There may be [ulcers](#) or proliferative lesions. The lesions can be on the gums, roof of the mouth, back of the mouth, tongue, or lips. The lesions at the gum line surround the whole tooth. Usually, the area around the back teeth, the premolars and molars, is most affected. Sometimes tooth re-absorption is seen. Radiographs (x-rays) of the mouth often show moderate to severe periodontal disease.

Biopsies are generally not recommended unless other causes for the oral lesions are suspected.

What is the treatment for chronic stomatitis/gingivitis?

First, let us review what plaque is. Bacteria play a major role in the formation of plaque. Bacteria live on remnants of food in the mouth. When bacteria combine with saliva and food debris in the channel between the tooth and gum, plaque forms and accumulates on the tooth. When bacteria continue to grow in the plaque and, as calcium salts are deposited, the plaque hardens to become a limestone-like material called tartar.

If the chronic stomatitis/gingivitis is due to a plaque intolerance, then it is essential we remove all plaque and keep it off. This is accomplished through:

- regular [dental cleaning and polishing by your veterinarian](#), usually at least every 6 months
- extraction of teeth with [tooth resorption](#) or severe [periodontal disease](#)
- daily home care, including [brushing](#), if the cat can tolerate it, and the application of 0.2% chlorhexidine
- medications such as cyclosporine, antibiotics, or others as prescribed by your veterinarian
- good nutrition, often with vitamin supplements since these cats may not eat as much as they should because of the discomfort

Unfortunately, even with this intensive care, the disease often progresses and the only way to cure the disease and eliminate the very painful lesions is to extract all of the teeth in back of the large canine teeth (fangs). This may appear drastic, but in almost all cases it is the only alternative. In 60-80% of cats the lesions will resolve once the teeth are extracted. Some veterinary dentists believe the longer the cat is on the medical management to control plaque as described above, the more likely the extractions will not be as successful or the response as fast. They therefore recommend extractions earlier in the course of disease versus later.

In cases of juvenile onset gingivitis, professional teeth cleaning every 2 months and once- to twice-daily brushing at home for the first year or so of their life, may allow them to revert to a more normal status as they age.

Knowing when to let go



We are never quite prepared for the death of a pet. Whether death is swift and unexpected or whether it comes at the end of a slow decline, we are never fully aware of what a pet has brought to our lives until our companion is gone.

Our involvement with the final outcome may be passive. We may simply not pursue medical or surgical treatment in an aging pet. Perhaps its ailment has no cure and the best we can do is alleviate some of its suffering so that it may live the remainder of its days in relative comfort. An illness or accident may take it suddenly.

Everyone secretly hopes for a pet's peaceful passing, hoping to find it lying in its favorite spot in the morning. The impact of a pet's death is significantly increased when, as responsible and loving caretakers, we decide to have the pet euthanized.

Euthanasia is the induction of painless death. In veterinary practice, it is accomplished by intravenous injection of a concentrated dose of anesthetic. The animal may feel slight discomfort when the needle tip passes through the skin, but this is no greater than for any other injection. The euthanasia solution takes only seconds to induce a total loss of consciousness. This is soon followed by respiratory depression and cardiac arrest.

Doctors of veterinary medicine do not exercise this option lightly. Their medical training and professional lives are dedicated to diagnosis and treatment of disease. Veterinarians are keenly aware of the balance between extending an animal's life and its suffering. Euthanasia is the ultimate tool to mercifully end a pet's suffering.

To request euthanasia of a pet is probably the most difficult decision a pet owner can make. All the stages of mourning may flood together, alternating rapidly. We may resent the position of power. We may feel angry at our pet for forcing us to make the decision. We may postpone the decision, bargaining with ourselves that if we wait another day, the decision will not be necessary. Guilt sits heavily on the one who must decide. The fundamental guideline is to do what is best for your pet, even if you suffer in doing this.

Remember that as much as your pet has the right to a painless death, you have the right to live a happy life.

Each of us mourns differently, some more privately than others, and some recover more quickly. Some pet owners find great comfort in acquiring a new pet soon after the loss of another. Others, however, become angry at the suggestion of another pet. They may feel that they are being disloyal to the memory of the preceding pet. Do not rush into selecting a replacement pet. Take the time to work through your grief.

To help you to prepare for the decision to euthanize your pet, consider the following questions. They are intended as a guide; only you can decide what is the best solution for you and your pet. Take your time. Speak with your veterinarian. Which choice will bring you the least cause for regret after the pet is gone?

Consider the following:

- What is the current quality of my pet's life?
- Is my pet still eating well? Playful? Affectionate toward me?
- Is my pet interested in the activity surrounding it?
- Does my pet seem tired and withdrawn most of the time?
- Is my pet in pain?
- Is there anything I can do to make my pet more comfortable?
- Are any other treatment options available?
- If a behavioral problem has led me to this decision, have I sought the expertise of a veterinary behavior consultant?
- Do I still love my pet the way I used to, or am I angry and resentful of the restrictions its condition has placed on my lifestyle?
- Does my pet sense that I am withdrawing from it?
- What is the quality of my life and how will this change?
- Will I want to be present during the euthanasia?
- Will I say goodbye to my pet before the euthanasia because it is too painful for me to assist?
- Will I want to wait in the reception area until it is over?
- Do I want to be alone or should I ask a friend to be present?
- Do I want any special burial arrangements made?
- Can my veterinarian store the body so that I can delay burial arrangements until later?
- Do I want to adopt another pet?
- Do I need time to recover from this loss before even considering another pet?

Letting go is never easy. No matter the circumstances, give yourself time to grieve.

It's ok.

Dealing With Loss

Surviving the Loss of Your Beloved Cat



It hurts. You feel real physical pain-- a black hole in the center of you that once was filled with love and laughter and joy. Now it is a void, only filled with emptiness. You sob for days, and just when you think you've shed your last tear, you chance upon a memento: a worn-out sock in the corner of the room, a dish you had customized with your beloved's name, and the tears flood again. Finally, one day, you accept your emptiness and your eyes become as dry and barren as your heart. "I'll never, NEVER replace him (her)", you state vehemently, when friends timidly approach the subject.

Frequent visitors to this site will know immediately that I am not talking about the loss of a spouse, or even a child, although the emotions are just as real. I'm talking about the loss of your *cat*, who perhaps was the only creature on Earth who loved you unconditionally. "What's the big deal? It was **only** a cat. Get *over* it." Most friends will not be crass enough to voice this opinion, but you can still sense the unspoken words in some.

Here are some Dos and Don'ts for helping to ease the pain of the loss of a cat:

- **Do:** Allow yourself to cry. Holding back the tears will only stuff all that emotion inside, where it will fester until it surfaces again at unforeseen times.
- **Don't:** Try to tough it out alone. If you have children, don't feel that you have to be "strong" for them. Sit with your child and say, "I'm sad because Tuffy died, aren't you?" and let the conversation go where it will. You'll not only help yourself, but also you will help your child develop coping skills
- **Do:** If you are of a creative bent, create a memorial album for your departed cat, or make a 3-dimensional shadow box with memorabilia of your cat. If your talent lies in web design, create a memorial site for your cat. Some free servers have user-friendly tools that "walk you through" creating a page.
- **Do:** Talk to an empathetic friend, preferably one who loves cats as much as you. If you don't have any close friends or family members that you feel would understand, visit the About Cats Forum. We have a special folder for Support and Encouragement, and everyone, old or new members alike, draw an enormous amount of comfort from this supportive community.
- **Don't:** Write off the thought of ever sharing your life with another cat. We'll talk more about that on the next page.

- **Do:** Focus on things that make you happy. Sometimes we forget to fully appreciate the beauty around us, until we are forced to think about what we've lost.

Take time to share an intimate minute with someone you love. If you have other cats or dogs, spend additional time with them. They may be suffering the same kind of lost feelings you have, and will appreciate knowing that you are not also going to leave.

Take the time to smell the flowers, glory at a magnificent sunset, listen to some good music, or pick up a book of poetry. As much as you may hate to face it, life does have a way of going on, and time really does heal these wounds. You are not betraying your beloved pet by carrying on.

Finally, you'll be able to talk about the happier times you shared with your lost one, and you'll find yourself in the unusual situation of being able to laugh through your tears, just when you thought you'd never laugh again. By then you may be willing to think about adopting a new cat, to live those happy times again. I firmly believe the cat you are mourning wants it that way.

I'm not suggesting that you drive directly from the veterinary clinic to your local shelter to pick up a new cat. You need and deserve some time for grief. Crying helps. When I lost my beloved Shannon in July of 2001, I cried for days, often at little things, like seeing his familiar face on my computer desktop, where it still resides, years later. I've made the "never replace him" statement many times. But, over the years I've come to learn that although it is true that you can never replace a cat you've loved and lost, you *can* fill that empty void in your home and your heart. In my opinion, adopting another kitty from a shelter or an animal rescue group is the *finest memorial* you can possibly make to the one you've lost. Many of our forum members (myself included) are convinced that a departed cat often plays a large role in sending a new kitty around as an "adoption volunteer." Sometimes when we've least expected it, a stray cat shows up on our doorstep, or we find our car traveling as if on autopilot in the direction of the local shelter or adoption day event in a pet store. In the case of Shannon, I knew that I couldn't survive without another Golden Boy in my life. It took eight months, but I found my Jaspurr and Joey, and I swear Shannon led me to them.

I've come to feel the same way about replacing a cat; it is a way of keeping his or her memory alive every day, in the form of a new furry being to enrich my home and fill the void that needs filling. What better way to honor him than to save the life of another cat? I've had Jaspurr and Joey for almost six years now, and not a day goes by that I don't look at them and thank my Shannon for sending them to me.

Think about it...

Understanding Euthanasia

Difficult decisions, understanding pet loss and grief

Having to make the decision to end a pet's life is never easy. It is a subject that many people do not want to talk about until they have to, but then it becomes a decision made under emotional stress. The purpose of this article is to explore what happens when an animal is "put to sleep" and how to handle the grief from losing a pet.

Making the Decision

It is an intensely personal decision to euthanize a beloved pet due to injury or disease. People often wonder if they will know when it is "time". Many ask their veterinarian "what would you do if it were your pet?". As a veterinarian, I could never make this decision for any pet owner (just stated the medical issues and facts), but offered this thought: it is probably "time" when the bad days begin to outnumber the good ones. Pet owners usually have a idea of what is 'good' and 'bad' in the life of their pet.

What happens when an animal is euthanized

(NOTE: Each veterinarian has their own protocol. This is written from my personal experience) I prefer to give a sedative tranquilizer prior to the euthanasia drug, which is given in the vein. The tranquilizer is either given as a tablet by mouth or a painless injection under the skin, like a vaccination. The animal is then restful and the owner may elect to spend some quiet time saying good-bye. Each case is different -- if the animal already has an IV catheter or medical conditions dictate otherwise, I do not sedate.

At this point, the owner may say good-bye to their pet and leave the veterinarian to finish the task. Other owners choose to spend some quiet time now and stay for the whole event. There is no right or wrong way to handle this - as a pet owner, this is entirely your choice and what you feel most comfortable with. If people are unsure as to what is 'right' for their situation, I tell them to consider the pet -- if the owner is very emotionally upset, some pets become stressed upon seeing their owner distraught.

Things to be aware of as death occurs:

- the eyes don't close.
- there *may* be a last gasping breath, called an agonal breath, that is more of a muscle spasm. The animal isn't aware of this.
- there *may* be vocalization.
- there *may* be muscle twitching.
- the heart *may* continue beating for a short period after breathing has stopped.
- the urinary bladder and possibly bowel contents will be released.
- In most circumstances, you will notice nothing except a peaceful release of tension, as in 'going to sleep'. Due to each animal's individual health situation, things will be different animal to animal.

After Euthanasia

There are many options for taking care of the deceased pet's body. Traditionally, veterinarians took care of the pet or the owner had a burial at home. Options now include pet cremation, memorial gardens, and cemeteries for pets -- including horses. There are also several online pet tribute and stories sites.

Understanding Grief and Loss

Pets are part of the family. Losing a pet is often like losing a close family member. Grief is normal, and people should express their grief - both emotionally and constructively. Some people elect to make a donation to a favorite animal charity in memory of their pet.

If the grief and sense of loss are overwhelming or prolonged, counseling and support is readily available from several sources, both online and off-line.

Be aware that pets may also grieve for their loss. They may exhibit grief by: not eating, not enjoying formerly favorite activities, or mild lethargy. These behaviors should be mild and short-lived. Always consult with your veterinarian to make sure there isn't a medical reason for not eating and lethargy.

What Happens to Tiger if You Die?

The Older Ones are Heartbreaking

One of the real heartbreakers I experience as a volunteer at the Seattle Animal Shelter is seeing older pets, cats and dogs, ten years and more, whose owners have died - usually unexpectedly. The older cats with whom I work who are suddenly without their attached humans become despondent and in some cases stop eating and drinking water because they are so sad, disoriented and of course miserable in the frightening environment of a shelter. Whenever we have such bereft cats in cages, we check them for dehydration regularly so they can be treated medically or put in a foster home if they become too depressed.

Never Enough Homes

Some wonderful people come in looking for older animals to whom they can give comfort and love for the remaining years they have left. But there are not enough of those kind folks, unfortunately. I always wish these cat owners had made arrangements for their cherished pets when they had the opportunity. It would prevent the suffering an animal endures in shelter situations. Worse, Seattle has a no kill police for healthy pets, but most shelters do not. They only keep animals for a certain period of time before they're put down.

Covering the Bases

I have made arrangements in my will for my pets, so they don't end up in a shelter if



Older cats like Precious are displaced, taken to shelters, if their caretakers unexpectedly die, unless owners make arrangements for their care.

anything should happen to me - and I'm in the best of health! Each of my pets goes to an individual whom I know and trust will care for the dog or cat properly.

Although it would be ideal to have all three animals go to the same home that would be a difficult situation to find realistically. Further, each pet is so fraught with individual idiosyncrasies that he or she will need a specific type of care or attention.

I've actually "trained" one person how to care for my 3 year-old Pomeranian, Oscar, so he will be treated in a way best suited for him. Being a rescued dog, his attitudes and aptitudes are different from a dog like my other one year-old Pomeranian, Missy, who has been hand raised before coming into my life. They can both be very well behaved, but need to be approached differently.

Likewise, my 13 year-old cat Cagney was brutalized as a young kitten (children set off firecrackers next to the mother cat while her kittens' eyes were still closed, for example), so it has taken virtually years to get her socialized to be an affectionate, loving cat who adores being held and petted now. So approaching her requires some knowledge - of her personality, problems and methods of continuing her sense of security.

I hope you will make some arrangements for your cats, no matter your age, no matter their age, so they don't end up alone, shuddering in a scary shelter, if something unexpected should happen to you.

Likewise, if you know you will be gone for a very long period of time - for reasons ranging from jail to business to extensive traveling - that you will make sure your pets will be provided for with a new home and some money for their ongoing care. There is the mistaken notion about cats being able to easily cope with being left alone because they are normally not high maintenance animals. But as you know, they become very attached to their caretakers and revel in the affection they come to rely upon for their security and happiness. Believe me, if you saw these shelter refugees, you would make sure your cat has a good home waiting for him or her in the unlikely event you were unexpectedly taken out of the picture.

Put Together a "Care Kit"

In addition to making sure your cat is provided for in your will, specifically stating who should care for him or her, you might want to prepare a complete "**How to care for my cat**" kit. This would include things like:

- Inoculation records
- Recurring medical conditions
- Medications to be taken regularly
- Spay/neuter certificate
- Favorite food, amounts
- Whether or not the pet can eat table scraps
- Favorite type of petting, hugging or cuddling
- Fears that spark aggressive behavior
- How to calm your cat if s/he becomes frightened or aggressive
- A day schedule - what time s/he gets up, all activities during the day, and bed time.

- Where they sleep - in a crate, on the bed, on the floor, on a pillow
- Do they travel well in cars
- Do they walk well on a leash
- Special activities - like Cagney and I love to play "fish" with a stick, shoe lace and cork at the end. Even at 13, she loves to chase the cork.
- A scarf or handkerchief with your smell on it that the cat can sleep with after you are gone.
- Photographs from the cat's past. I think this helps a bonding process with the new caretaker.

Of course, the hope is that you never have to use this. But in the event you do, you know your cats will be properly cared for, and that can give you peace of mind whether you're among the living or if you unexpectedly become their guardian angel.

Q&A

Recommendations for New Guardians

We would like to congratulate you for adopting your new cat/kitten. Belonging to a cat can be an extremely rewarding experience, but it also carries with it quite a bit of responsibility. We hope this document will give you the information needed to make some good decisions regarding your cat.

How should I introduce my new kitten to his new environment?

A cat is naturally inclined to investigate its new surroundings. It is suggested that the cat's area of exploration be limited initially so that these natural tendencies do not create an unmanageable task. 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?

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 the kitten. The existing cat must not feel that it is necessary to compete for food or for attention. The new kitten should have his own food and food bowl, and he should not be permitted to eat from the other cat's bowl.

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 occur occasionally, 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.

Can I discipline a kitten?

Disciplining a young kitten may be necessary if his behavior threatens people or property, but harsh punishment should be avoided. Hand clapping and using shaker cans or horns can be intimidating enough to inhibit undesirable behavior. Remote punishment is preferred. Remote punishment consists of using something that appears unconnected to

the punisher to stop the problem behavior. Examples include using spray bottles, throwing objects in the direction of the kitten to startle (but not hit) him, and making loud noises. Remote punishment is preferred because the kitten associates punishment with the undesirable act and not with you.

When should my kitten be vaccinated?

Your pet is up to date with vaccines, based on its vaccination history with Furry Friends, discuss any follow ups with your veterinarian.

Do all kittens have worms?

Intestinal parasites are common in kittens. Kittens can become infected with parasites almost as soon as they are born. For example, the most important source of roundworm infection in kittens is the mother's milk. Periodic de-worming throughout the cat's life is recommended.

Tapeworms are the most common intestinal parasite of cats. Kittens become infected with them when they swallow fleas; the eggs of the tapeworm live inside the flea. When the cat chews or licks his skin as a flea bites, the flea may be swallowed. Exposure to fleas may result in a new infection; this can occur in as little as two weeks. 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. Tapeworms are very easily treated with a single shot or pills.

There are lots of choices of cat foods. What should I feed my kitten?

You can find list of recommended, nutritional and safe options for your cat in this booklet.

Best balanced diet is one of good quality dry food and small amounts of wet food. They certainly should not be in equal amount.

How do I insure that my kitten is well socialized?

The socialization period for cats is between 2 and 12 weeks of age. During that time, the kitten is very impressionable to social influences. If he has good experiences with men, women, children, dogs, other cats, etc., he is likely to accept them throughout life. If the experiences are absent or unpleasant, he may become apprehensive or adverse to any of them. During the period of socialization, we encourage you to expose your cat to as many types of social events and influences as possible.

What can be done about fleas on my kitten?

Fleas do not stay on your kitten all of their time. Occasionally, they will jump off and seek another host. It is important to kill fleas on your new kitten before they can become established in your house. Many of the flea control products that are safe on adult cats are not safe for kittens less than four months of age. Be sure that any flea product you use is labeled safe for kittens.

Remember, not all insecticides that can be used on dogs are safe for cats and kittens.

There are several products that are given only once per month; they can be used in kittens as young as six weeks. Program is a tablet that causes the adult fleas to lay sterile eggs. It is very effective, but it does not kill adult fleas which usually live 2-3 months. Advantage and Frontline Top Spot are monthly products that kill adult fleas. They are liquids that are applied to the skin at the base of the neck. They, too, are very effective.

Can I trim my kitten's sharp toenails?

Kittens have very sharp toenails. They can be trimmed with your regular fingernail clippers or with nail trimmers made for dogs and cats. If you take too much off the nail, you will get into the quick; bleeding and pain will occur. If this happens, neither you nor your cat will want to do this again. A few points are helpful:

- a. If your cat has clear or white nails, you can see the pink of the quick through the nail. Avoid the pink area, and you should be out of the quick.
- b. If your cat has black nails, you will not be able to see the quick so only cut 1/32" (1 mm) of the nail at a time until the cat begins to get sensitive. The sensitivity will usually occur before you are into the blood vessel. With black nails, it is likely that you will get too close on at least one nail.
- c. If your cat has some clear and some black nails, use the average clear nail as a guide for cutting the black ones.
- d. When cutting nails, use sharp trimmers. Dull trimmers tend to crush the nail and cause pain even if you are not in the quick.
- e. 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.

What are ear mites?

Ear mites are tiny insect-like parasites that live in the ear canal of cats (and dogs). The most common sign of ear mite infection is scratching of the ears. Sometimes the ears will appear dirty because of a black material in the ear canal; this material is sometimes shaken out. The instrument vets use for examining the ear canals, an otoscope, has the necessary magnification to allow them to see the mites. Sometimes, mites can be found by taking a small amount of the black material from the ear canal and examining it with a microscope. Although they may leave the ear canals for short periods of time, they spend the vast majority of their lives within the protection of the ear canal. Transmission generally requires direct ear-to-ear contact. Ear mites are common in litters of kittens if their mother has ear mites.

Why should I have my female cat spayed/neutered?

Spaying/neutering offers several advantages. For females it will help with suppressing the effects of the “heat”. The female's heat periods result in about 2-3 weeks of obnoxious behavior. This can be quite annoying if your cat is kept indoors. Male cats are attracted from blocks away and, in fact, seem to come out of the woodwork. After spaying, heat periods no longer occur. For males it’s marking the territory. They become very possessive of their territory and mark it with their urine to ward off other cats. The tom cat's urine develops a very strong odor that will be almost impossible to remove from your house. They also try to constantly enlarge their territory which means one fight after another. Cats that are spayed/neutered are healthier, less susceptible to hormonal changes and lead a long, happy life.

If I choose to breed my cat, when should that be done?

We do NOT endorse breeding. Overpopulation of cats is causing suffering, death, daily euthanasia by animal control because they cannot all be placed in new homes. Please do not breed. Adopt.

Can you recommend something for pet identification?

Cat you have adopted has been chipped. You can get all the necessary information from the Furry Friends administrator.