



Kitten Visit One: Kitten Health

Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc.

Recommended Vaccination Protocol	2
• When should my kitten be vaccinated?	2
• Can my kitten have reactions to vaccines?	2
• What diseases do vaccinations prevent?	3
Kitten Parasites	5
• Intestinal Parasites.....	5
• Heartworms	6
• Toxoplasmosis	6
• Fleas	7
Spaying/Neutering Your Kitten.....	8
• When should I get my kitten spayed or neutered?	8
• State-of-the-Art Facilities	8
• Neuters	8
• Spays	8
• Anesthesia	8
• Pain Management.....	9
Declawing Your Kitten	10
• When is it best to declaw my kitten?	10
• What happens during the procedure?.....	10
• Pain Management.....	10
• Avoiding Problems	10
Common Kitten Health Problems	11
• Diarrhea.....	11
• Vomiting.....	11
• Low Blood Sugar.....	11
• Accidental Poisoning.....	12
Developing a Healthy Relationship with your Kitten.....	13
• Getting to Know Your Kitten.....	13
• Identifying Your Kitten.....	13
• Training Your Kitten.....	13
• Litter Box Training	14
• Introducing Your Kitten to Other Cats	15



Vaccinations for Your Kitten

Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc.

*Vaccinations are shots given to your pets that will protect them from getting diseases. Many of the vaccinations require one or more **booster vaccinations**, which are shots that renew the effectiveness of the original vaccine. It is very important to get the vaccinations and booster shots on schedule to keep your kitten healthy. The information below describes what type of vaccinations your kitten needs and when he or she will need them.*

When should my kitten be vaccinated?

To keep your kitten healthy, Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc. recommends that the first temporary vaccination be given when your kitten is 5 - 6 weeks old. This vaccine is repeated at 8 weeks, and then booster vaccinations are given every three to four weeks until your kitten is 4 months old.

Most breeders or rescue organizations give at least one set of vaccinations while the kitten is in their care. For this reason, it is important to bring any records you received with your kitten so that we can give your kitten the vaccinations at the appropriate time. A typical vaccination protocol is provided below to give you a general guideline of the ages that your kitten will need vaccinations:

6 weeks	FVRCP	<i>(usually given by the breeder/rescue group)</i>
8 weeks	FVRCP	
12 weeks	FVRCP and Feline Leukemia (FIV and FIP optional)	
16 weeks	FVRCP and Feline Leukemia and Rabies (FIV and FIP optional)	
20 weeks	(FIV optional)	

Why does my kitten need multiple booster vaccinations?

Kittens have some natural immunity to any diseases to which the mother is immune. This immunity is passed to the kittens through the colostrum during the first 12-24 hours of nursing in the form of *maternal antibodies*. These maternal antibodies provide some natural protection against disease, but do not prevent it entirely. Unfortunately, these maternal antibodies also interfere with the ability of the body to respond to the vaccinations. This means that vaccinations given to young kittens (except Rabies vaccinations) only provide temporary immunity and must be repeated to ensure a long-lasting effect. In addition, most vaccinations (regardless of age) must be administered twice before they become fully protective. For this reason, kittens starting their vaccinations late must have both the vaccination and the booster vaccination to be protected. If your kitten is not receiving vaccinations at the recommended ages for any reason, be sure to talk with our doctors about a modified vaccination schedule for your pet.

Can my kitten have reactions to vaccines?

Adverse vaccine reactions occur in about 10% of vaccinated cats.

Common Reactions

- Low-grade fever
- Lethargy/hiding behavior
- Lack of appetite

Most of the time the reaction begins four to 12 hours after the vaccination is given and subsides within 24 - 72 hours. **If your cat is exhibiting signs for more than three days, it is important that you contact our hospital.**

Site Reactions

Another common reaction is the appearance of a bump or swelling at the injection site. Most of the time these swellings are due to local immune reaction and are not a medical concern. In rare cases, an infection may occur at the vaccination site, causing a small abscess to form. If you notice a vaccination site reaction, please bring it to the attention of our veterinarians so that we can examine the area.

Allergic Reactions

Allergic reactions to vaccinations are uncommon but can occur. Cats experiencing an allergic reaction may have a swollen face or swollen eyes. Hives are also a sign of allergic vaccine reaction. In the most extreme cases, breathing difficulty can result. **If your cat exhibits any of these signs, please contact us immediately.** If a vaccine reaction occurs, we will try to determine which vaccine was responsible and discuss options for future vaccinations.

Sarcomas/Tumors

Injection-related sarcomas occur in approximately one per 10,000 cats. A sarcoma is a tumor that occurs at the site of vaccination or other injection, usually months to years after the vaccine is administered. While the risk of this occurring in your cat is extremely low (much lower than the risk of your cat contracting a disease if unvaccinated), this tumor type is very difficult to treat. If you would like further information on this tumor, our doctors will be happy to discuss this with you.

What diseases do vaccinations prevent?

Below you will find a discussion of recommended vaccinations, the diseases they prevent, and the ages at which they should be given.

FVRCP: This vaccine will protect your cat against a combination of common infections. It is first given at 5 - 6 weeks and repeated at 8 weeks. It is then boosted every 3 - 4 weeks until your kitten is at least 16 weeks old. Booster vaccinations are then given yearly. The following diseases are prevented by the components of this vaccination:

- **Distemper virus (panleukopenia)** causes neurological problems, including interference with brain development in young kittens. It also causes a decrease in the production of white blood cells (the cells that fight infection).
- **Rhinotracheitis virus** causes recurrent respiratory tract infections as well as mouth and eye ulcers.
- **Calicivirus** causes high fever, decreased appetite, oral ulcers and respiratory tract infection.
- **Chlamydia virus** causes conjunctivitis (inflammation of tissue around the eye) and respiratory tract infection.

Feline Leukemia: The Feline Leukemia virus (FeLV) causes immune system depression (similar to the effect of AIDS on humans). Cats infected with this virus generally experience multiple and severe health problems including infectious diseases and cancers.

Many cats will die as a result of this virus and the secondary problems it causes. While some of these cats will die soon after contracting the virus, many will remain carriers for years before showing signs of disease. Like with HIV in humans, cats can be very healthy for a long time before the virus starts to cause problems.

How is it transmitted—FeLV is transmitted through tears, saliva, nasal secretions, blood, urine and feces. Casual contact with other cats (touching noses, communal grooming, etc.) can spread the infection. In rare cases owners can carry this virus on hands or clothing from stray cats outside to indoor cats. Because this is possible and because of the severity of the disease, Clermont Animal

Hospital, Inc. recommends that all cats (including strictly indoor cats) be vaccinated for this disease. **FeLV is very common in this area and any cats that go outside definitely need to be vaccinated.**

This vaccine can first be given at 12 weeks. It is then boosted once, three to four weeks later, and then administered yearly. **We recommend doing a simple blood test when your cat is 12 weeks or older to make sure that he or she has not already been infected with FeLV.** This is particularly important for kittens that have come from shelters or were found as a stray as these cats are more likely to be at risk for FeLV. While FeLV is not treatable, it is important to know if your cat already has the virus so that you can avoid exposing healthy cats. Also, while vaccinating these cats for FeLV will not hurt them, it will not protect them either.

Rabies: We routinely give the rabies vaccination with the last FVRCP vaccination at around 16 weeks of age. If your kitten has high exposure to wildlife or travels to areas where rabies is more common, we can give this vaccination as early as 12 weeks old. **This vaccination is required by law for all cats.** Even indoor cats are at risk as the most common source in this area is the bat. Rabies is becoming an increasing problem in the wildlife population in the state of Ohio.

The first vaccination must be boosted after one year. The next vaccinations are approved for three years in the state of Ohio. If your cat travels to a state where rabies is a greater concern, we may recommend yearly vaccination.

With each rabies vaccination, you will receive a certificate to keep as proof of vaccination. Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc. can also provide a rabies tag free of charge that you can attach to your cat's collar. This tag has an identification number and our hospital's telephone number. We keep a database of all rabies identification numbers and owner information. If your pet should ever be lost while wearing this tag, anyone who finds your pet can report it to our hospital and we will help reunite you and your cat. Because most cats do not wear collars, we do not routinely supply a tag. Please request a tag at the time of vaccination if you want one.

Feline Immunodeficiency (FIV): (*optional*) This vaccination is recommended for all cats that spend time outdoors. The FIV virus (also called Feline AIDS) causes very similar problems to Feline Leukemia.

Unlike FeLV, FIV is only spread through contact with infected blood. Cats can contract this disease by biting, scratching or fighting with infected cats. Like FeLV, there is no cure for FIV.

Cats who contract this disease usually die young of infectious disease or cancer. Because all vaccinated cats will test positive for FIV, **it is recommended that an FIV test be done BEFORE giving the first FIV vaccine.** A combination FeLV/FIV test can be performed in-house with result available within 15 minutes. This vaccine can first be given at 12 weeks. It must then be boosted twice within three to four weeks between vaccinations. If your indoor kitten starts venturing outside later in life, we can start giving the vaccine at that time; however, even adult cats need a series of three vaccinations the first year that this vaccination is given.

Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP): The disease causes a wide range of problems including:

- ascities (fluid-filled abdomen)
- heart problems
- eye problems
- neurological problems
- kidney problems
- death—this disease is 100% fatal

Cats are usually most susceptible as kittens or young adults and older adult cats don't usually need to be vaccinated. Kittens should be vaccinated for this disease if they spend significant time outdoors or if there are multiple (more than four) cats in the household. All cats in catteries should be vaccinated (including older cats), as older cats often serve as carriers without any sign of illness.



Kitten Parasites

Parasites are living beings such as worms or insects that live on or inside your pet. They usually feed upon your pet, which can cause your kitten to be uncomfortable, malnourished or even to die.

Intestinal Parasites

Intestinal parasites are a very common problem in kittens. In fact, nearly all kittens are born with **roundworms**. These worms can be transmitted from the mother to the kittens while they are still in the uterus and can also be passed through the milk to nursing kittens.

Symptoms

Symptoms of intestinal parasites include vomiting and diarrhea, poor condition of fur, and in extreme cases, even death. However, some kittens with parasites do not show these symptoms.

Just because you do not see the worms does not mean that they are not there. It is important to realize these worms live in the intestines, so you will NOT see them in the stool (poop) of your kitten unless they are dead or dying.

Prevention and Diagnosis

Worming—Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc. recommends routine worming for all kittens every three to four weeks with vaccinations until they are at least four months old. Kittens with a heavy worm burden or with vomiting or diarrhea related to the worms may need to be wormed more frequently.

Fecal Examination—In addition to giving your kitten a de-wormer at each visit, we recommend a routine fecal examination at each visit. Please bring a small amount of stool (poop) with you when you bring your kitten for vaccinations. If you have several kittens from the same litter, only one stool sample is needed.

The fecal analysis shows if there are intestinal parasite eggs or single-cell parasites called **coccidia** in your kitten's stool. This is important to know because some parasites can infect humans when the eggs are being shed in the stool.

The fecal analysis also allows us to determine if your kitten has intestinal parasites other than roundworms. Hookworms, tapeworms and coccidia all can affect young kittens. These parasites can also cause diarrhea, vomiting, poor body or coat condition, and (in extreme cases) even death.

The general de-wormer that we give your kitten for roundworms does not provide protection against some of these other parasites. While they are not nearly as common as roundworms in kittens, they are still seen very frequently.

How many times should my kitten be tested? It is also important to understand that just because your kitten's fecal was negative (no worm eggs) at a previous visit, does not mean that these parasites are not present. Due to their complex life cycle worms may be present without shedding eggs. It is important to have at least three negative stool samples before we can assure you that your kitten is free of all parasites.

At your last kitten vaccination visit, we recommend an **“adult” fecal**. This is because by four months old, kittens can be infected with worms that are a problem for adult cats. These worms are more

difficult to detect and require a more sophisticated test to ensure accuracy. We recommend that this test be run on a yearly basis for all adult cats.

Protecting Your Family

It is important for you to know if your kitten is currently shedding roundworm eggs in his or her stool in order to protect your family. Humans, particularly children, can be infected with roundworms by eating the larva. This is only a concern if there are eggs in your kitten's stool.

If your kitten is actively shedding parasite eggs, it is very important to be as clean as possible in dealing with your kitten. It is also very important to pick up ALL stools immediately (clean the litter box several times a day) to prevent accidental infection of a family member or re-infection of your kitten. If the stool is left in the litter box, eggs can develop into the infective larval state.

Toxoplasmosis

Toxoplasma gondii is a parasite with a very complex life cycle. Cats contract this parasite through exposure to stool of an infected cat or by eating an infected animal (such as a mouse or raw meat).

Protecting Your Family

While the reproductive stage of toxoplasmosis only occurs in cats, intermediate stages can affect humans and many other animals. Human infections are more likely to be passed through undercooked meat or gardening in areas where stray cats have defecated (pooped) than to exposure from a pet cat. However, because this disease can cause serious health problems, particularly in children and pregnant women, it is a concern. Therefore, it is very important to have your cat screened for this parasite.

The following are recommendations for people at high risk for contracting toxoplasmosis (pregnant women, children under 10 and individuals with weak immune systems):

1. Have an adult fecal sample test performed to look for toxoplasma eggs in the stool.
2. Have your cat tested for FIV/FeLV. Cats with these diseases are more likely to shed eggs. If your cat is positive for either of these diseases or has a weak immune system for any other reason, a blood test is recommended to ensure that your cat is not a carrier of this disease.
3. Make sure the stool is removed from the litter box promptly and properly disposed of. It is recommended that high-risk individuals not clean the litter box. If this cannot be avoided, wear gloves, and wash your hands thoroughly.
4. Remember that pet cats are only one source of infection. Be sure to take precautions from other sources of exposure (cook all meat thoroughly, wear gloves when gardening, etc.).
5. Keep your cat indoors. This decreases the risk of exposure.

Screening

The "adult" fecal we recommend at 16 weeks will identify the eggs in the stool if your kitten is shedding eggs. Cats must be actually shedding eggs in order for a human to become infected. Young cats and cats with FIV or FeLV are more likely to shed the eggs of this parasite than other cats, however, any infected cat will shed eggs during times of stress. Eggs in the stool are not infectious until they have developed into the larval stage one to two days later. For this reason, cleaning stool from the litter box daily should prevent human infection.

Heartworms

Heartworms are a deadly disease in cats. While heartworm infestation is primarily a disease of dogs, it does occasionally affect cats.

Larval stages of these worms are spread by the mosquito from an infected dog to your cat. Because of this, we recommend that **outdoor cats and cats that spend significant amounts of time outdoors are treated monthly with heartworm preventive**. We carry **Advantage Multi®** for cats that will both prevent heartworms and kill fleas. This is a monthly topical (skin) application.

Fleas and Ticks

Many cats have a problem with fleas. If you notice just one or two fleas on your cat, chances are there are many more in your house and yard. Fleas spend less than 15 percent of their time on the animal. The rest of the time is spent in the surrounding environment. For this reason, for every flea you see, there may be six more hiding in your carpet or yard. In addition, fleas reproduce very quickly. A small number of adult fleas can generate hundreds of thousands of fleas within a few months.

Ticks are most common in mid-to-late spring and early summer, but can be a problem from early spring to late fall. Animals that run through tall grass, weeds, or wooded areas are at risk. Tick control is important because ticks can carry a number of diseases that can affect both your pet and your family.

Prevention

Because it is easier to prevent a flea or tick infestation rather than eliminate it once it occurs, we recommend using monthly flea preventative for all cats. Currently we recommend **Assurity®** for routine monthly flea protection for indoor cats and cats with little or no risk of tick exposure. It is the newest and strongest product for flea control. If ticks are a concern, **Frontline Plus®** is the only product that seems to provide good tick protection for cats. As this product has been on the market for more than a decade, some populations of fleas are starting to develop resistance, so this product is only recommended if ticks are a major concern.

Treatment

Clermont Animal Hospital offers a variety of products for flea and tick control. Because each situation is unique, our staff will work with you to suggest the product or combination of products that will most quickly and effectively eliminate your flea or tick problem. The products we carry are much more effective than anything you can buy from a pet store or grocery store. Most products you get from a pet or grocery store only treat fleas in the adult stage and have limited (if any) effectiveness against ticks. It is important to remember that only 5 percent of the fleas are in the adult stage, and immature fleas will survive and develop into adults even when these flea treatments are used. For every adult flea, there may be close to 100 immature fleas. Not all life stages can be killed, so once your cat is infested with fleas, it may take several months or more to totally eliminate the problem.

Once fleas have been spotted, it is necessary to treat them aggressively for several months in a row to ensure that all immature fleas have been eliminated. Our staff can help you create a customized treatment plan for successful treatment of both your pet and the environment. Ask us for further information.



Spaying/Neutering Your Kitten

Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc.

Spaying females prevents unwanted pregnancy and eliminates behavior changes that occur when your kitten is in heat (having her period). Spays also prevent certain health problems such as some cancers and life-threatening uterine infections.

Neutering male kittens prevents them from getting a female cat pregnant, and it may help to eliminate behavioral problems such as roaming and aggression. The strong odor of male cat urine is eliminated or reduced by neutering your cat. Neuters also remove the risk of certain cancers.

When should I get my kitten spayed or neutered?

Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc. recommends that all cats be spayed or neutered at five to six months of age (with the exception of purebred breeding animals). At this age, they are old enough to handle the effects of the anesthetic but have not reached sexual maturity.

State-of-the-Art Facilities

The surgical suite at Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc. offers the most up-to-date equipment to monitor your kitten while he or she is anesthetized.

- Our spay patients are monitored with a heart/respiratory monitor so that any changes in heart rate or respiration are detected immediately.
- Sophisticated equipment is available to monitor EKG, blood pressure, blood oxygenation, and other vital parameters should any complications arise during the procedure.
- We use water circulating heating pads during surgery and hot air blankets after surgery to ensure that your kitten's core body temperature does not drop too low.

Neuters

Cat neuters are very short procedures that require only a light anesthetic. No sutures (stitches) are required with this procedure. We do recommend using alternate litter box filler, such as a paper litter, for 10 – 14 days after the procedure to prevent infection at the surgery site.

Spays

Spays are surgical procedures, requiring a small incision into the abdomen. Your cat will have several sutures (stitches) that will need to be removed in 10-14 days. During this time, it is important to keep the incision site clean and dry. Outdoor cats should be kept inside. Strict confinement is not necessary, but excessive jumping or rough play can put too much strain on the incision site.

Anesthesia

The injectable and gas anesthetics we use are the safest available. This helps ensure that your pet has a quick recovery and allows us to do spays and neuters as outpatient procedures for most animals.

Despite the latest in technology and all of the precautions we take to ensure safe anesthesia, every anesthetic procedure has a small risk associated with it. Most anesthetic complications occur when underlying liver, kidney or heart problems exist but cannot be detected on physical exam. These are rare in animals under a year of age, but we can do pre-surgical blood screenings to aid in detecting underlying problems before anesthesia.

Pain Management

Pain management is an important concern to our hospital staff. We make the smallest incisions possible to decrease the amount of post-operative soreness. A new FDA approved pain medication is now available to help minimize your cat's discomfort after a spay procedure. Neutered males experience minimal discomfort due to the small incision site and are not routinely given pain medication. However, if you are concerned that your animal is in pain, please let us know so that we can prescribe medication to make your cat more comfortable.

Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc.

1404 Old State Route 74

Batavia, Ohio 45103

513-732-1730

www.ClermontAnimal.net

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Declawing Your Kitten

Declawing a cat requires the removal of the last bone in each toe at the joint. Whenever possible, it is better to train your kitten not to use his or her claws instead of declawing him or her. This will be covered in next visit's handout.

When is it best to declaw my kitten?

If you are not successful at training your kitten, it is better to have your pet declawed while he or she is still young. Kittens have faster recovery times, a lower rate of complications and less discomfort with this procedure than adult cats. If you are planning to have your cat declawed, we recommend doing the declaw procedure at the same time you spay or neuter your cat.

What happens during the procedure?

This procedure requires an overnight stay in the hospital. After the claws are removed, pressure bandages are applied to keep the feet from bleeding and allow the initial stages of healing to begin. These bandages are removed first thing the next morning, and your cat is closely observed throughout the day to make sure that no bleeding occurs and that pain is well controlled.

Pain Management

For all standard declaws Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc. uses injectable pain medication after the procedure, and the following day. This is the minimal amount of pain control necessary for most cats. The day following the procedure we can either give a short acting injection of pain medication and dispense pills for at-home pain management, or we can give a long-acting injection of anti-inflammatory medication to decrease pain due to inflammation during the hospital stay and for the first 48 hours at home.

To help better ensure your cat's comfort, recommend a pain management package that combines a nerve block (to numb your cat's feet during and after the procedure) with the long-acting injection of anti-inflammatory medication. This provides the best pain management for all cats and is strongly encouraged for all cats over seven pounds or over one year of age.

Avoiding Problems

Complications that can be associated with declaw procedures include:

- Sore/painful feet
- Limping
- Bleeding from toes
- Infection from surgery sites

To help decrease the risk of infection we recommend using an alternate litter such as compacted paper litter or shredded paper for 10 - 14 days after surgery.

Most cats will limit their own activity, making activity restriction unnecessary; however, we do recommend confining your cat for the first 48 hours after surgery in case post-operative bleeding occurs. If bleeding should occur, put pressure on the bleeding paw with a clean rag or paper towel until the bleeding stops. Once the bleeding has stopped, confine your cat more strictly (to a cage or crate if necessary) for 12-24 hours.



Common Kitten Health Problems

Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc.

Diarrhea

Episodes of diarrhea, or loose stool (poop), are very common among kittens.

Common Causes

- Intestinal parasites
- Diet changes
- Dietary indiscretion (your kitten eats something he or she shouldn't)
- Infectious disease

How serious is diarrhea? The consistency of the stool can range from just slightly soft to very watery. If your kitten has watery diarrhea, dehydration may be a concern, particularly if the diarrhea is accompanied by vomiting or decreased water intake. **Any kitten with watery diarrhea should be examined as soon as possible.**

In less severe cases, your kitten should be examined if any of the following apply:

1. Your kitten is also vomiting
 2. Your kitten is lethargic or is not eating
 3. Diarrhea lasts for more than 48 hours
 4. Blood is seen in the stool.
-

Vomiting

The same things that cause diarrhea can also cause vomiting.

Is vomiting a concern? If your cat “spits up” his food shortly after eating but has no other signs, it is probably not a concern. However, it is a good idea to have your cat examined if:

- Your cat has more than three episodes in a 24-hour period
- Your cat is vomiting even when his or her stomach is empty
- Your cat vomits up blood

If you know your cat has swallowed a non-food item (part of a toy, garbage, string, etc.) and is vomiting, it is important to seek immediate attention. If a foreign object becomes lodged in your cat's intestines, it can create a deadly blockage.

Low Blood Sugar

Low blood sugar is when kitten does not have enough sugar in his or her blood to function. It is a serious condition and could result in death.

Low blood sugar is particularly a problem in very young kittens and any kitten weighing less than three pounds. Small kittens have very little extra energy reserve. If they go too long without eating (either from lack of appetite due to illness or from lack of food availability) they can develop low blood sugar.

Symptoms

Signs of this condition include

- Severe lethargy
- Weakness
- Tremors
- Seizures

What can you do if you suspect low blood sugar?

Low blood sugar is an emergency situation that can lead to death if not corrected. If you suspect low blood sugar in your kitten, immediately rub **Felovite®** (available through Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc.), honey, or **Karo®** syrup on his or her gums and call us as soon as possible. Most cases need to be treated with IV dextrose (sugar) fluids.

Prevention

To prevent low blood sugar, feed your kitten three to five times a day until he or she is at least three pounds or three months old.

Accidental Poisoning

Kittens are very curious and may get into trouble by eating things that are poisonous. Rat poison, antifreeze, medications (including Tylenol and Advil) and poisonous plants (including all lilies) are all common examples of toxic substances. It is important that you keep anything toxic out of your kitten's reach.

What should I do if my kitten eats something poisonous?

Call us immediately--don't wait. If an accidental poisoning should occur or be suspected, emergency attention may be necessary. Kittens that have been poisoned have the best chance of full recovery if they are treated within two hours of poison ingestion. If possible, have the package of the poisonous item available when you call for emergency attention. Do not try to make your kitten vomit or feed your kitten anything until you have spoken with a doctor.

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Batavia, Ohio 45103

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Developing a Healthy Relationship with your Kitten

Getting to Know Your Kitten

It is important for your kitten to feel comfortable in your home and to trust you and your family.

Below are some tips to help you and your family get to know your kitten:

- NEVER cause your kitten pain as punishment (beating, kicking), no matter how mad you are! This will lead to an aggressive, fearful cat that does not trust you.
- Be sure to supervise all young children around your kitten, so that they do not hurt the kitten. Make sure that all members of your family spend time with your new kitten and participate in all care and training. This way your kitten learns to love and respect all members of your family.
- Have friends and neighbors play with your kitten and offer treats and praise. This will help your kitten become better socialized.
- Play with your kitten's ears, feet and mouth. It is important that your kitten learns to allow you to do this so that later on you can trim nails, brush teeth and administer medication. Be sure to make this fun with lots of praise, treats and play.
- Hold your kitten in various positions: on his back, high in the air, etc. This helps to build trust.

Identifying Your Kitten

Despite your best efforts to keep your kitten confined to your home or yard, many cats escape or get lost. This is particularly a concern for cats that spend time outdoors. Providing proper identification for your kitten may help reunite you and your kitten should these ever occur.

Tags

The rabies tag you can get at Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc. is one form of identification. These are provided only upon request since not all cats wear collars. You can also purchase tags engraved with important information. Tags will not help, however, if your kitten loses his or her collar, which is a common problem with cats.

Microchipping

Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc. recommends that all kittens be microchipped if they spend time outside. Microchipping provides a permanent form of identification. All area shelters and veterinary hospitals are equipped with scanners and can identify your cat in this way. The system we use is called Home Again®. This company maintains a database on all cats that have been microchipped with this system. This service provides a 24-hour information hotline to help reunite pets with their owners.

We recommend that you have your cat microchipped at the same time that we spay or neuter your pet. While anesthesia is not required, the application does cause momentary discomfort in awake animals. It involves using a large needle to implant a small sterile chip under the skin between your cat's shoulder blades. When the scanner is passed over the chip, it will read the unique identification number programmed into the chip.

Training Your Kitten

Kittens need lots of repetition in order to learn new things. Remember to be consistent when training your kitten—make sure that all family members use the same command every time.

Teaching “No”

The first command your kitten should learn is “no.” This command can be used for nipping, inappropriate scratching or going to the bathroom in inappropriate places. To teach your kitten the “no” command:

- Give your kitten a sharp “NO!” whenever he or she is doing something bad. Tone of voice is very important.
 - If your voice does not stop your kitten immediately, try shaking a can of pebbles or squirting your kitten in the face with a spray bottle or water gun.
 - Once you have your kitten’s attention, gently but firmly redirect your kitten’s energy and interest to something more appropriate.
-

Litter Box Training

If your kitten does not already use a litter box, it is important to start litter box training your kitten as soon as possible. Due to the nature of cats, most are litter trained easily. However, if you do not start training your cat early on, he or she may develop other favored sites to use the bathroom and use these sites repeatedly.

Until your kitten is litter trained, it is important to provide close supervision at all times. If you see your kitten sniffing around or looking like he or she is going to go to the bathroom, or is in the act of going to the bathroom, make a loud sharp noise to distract your kitten. Then take your kitten immediately to the litter box. Remember to be firm but not harsh. Never use harsh physical correction—this will only cause your kitten to fear you.

What if he or she has already “had an accident?”

If you come into a room to find a mess on your floor, do not reprimand your kitten. Kittens do not associate correction after the fact with the act of “making a mess.” If you find a mess, just clean it up while the kitten is out of sight, placing any fecal material into the litter box.

After an accident, watch your kitten more carefully to catch him or her in the act. If you cannot be with your kitten all of the time, confining your cat to a bathroom or cage (with a litter box) may be necessary while you are away.

Rewarding good behavior is much more effective than punishing bad behavior. When your kitten uses his or her box, be sure to give plenty of praise and/or a treat.

A note on cleaning--It is important to use an enzymatic cleaner that breaks down the urine and fecal remnants, not just a regular cleaner (**Equalizer®** is available through our office). Cats have an excellent sense of smell and may continue to sniff out and use the same spot unless it is enzymatically cleaned.

Suggestions for Litterbox Training

If you are having difficulties training your cat to use the litter box consider the following suggestions:

1. Try adding one or more additional litter boxes to your house. Young kittens may be too wrapped up in play to use a litter box at the other end of the house. By providing closer alternatives you may get your kitten to use his or her box more consistently. Also, kittens may not like to use the same litter box as other cats in the house. A good rule of thumb is to have one more litter box than you have cats.

2. Try several different brands of litter. Some cats exhibit a definite litter preference and will not use certain types of kitty litter. Make sure that at least one box has very fine “clumping” litter, as many cats seem to prefer this litter type (make sure your kitten does not eat the clumping litter, however, as this can cause problems).
3. Clean the boxes more frequently. Many cats will not use a litter box if it is particularly smelly or if there is already a lot of excrement in it. In some cases, even daily cleaning is not enough. Do not use strong-smelling cleaners, as these often repel cats.
4. If your cat is always using the bathroom in one spot, try feeding your cat there. Cats will not want to eliminate close to where they eat.
5. If all else fails, confine your cat to a small space (such as a bathroom) with a litter box at one end and food/water dishes as far away from the box as possible. Keep your cat in confinement until he or she consistently uses the litter box. Then gradually increase the amount of time you allow your cat to spend outside of this space. Watch your cat closely whenever he or she is out of confinement until you are sure that he/she will not have further accidents.

At your next visit, we will give you more comprehensive information on other aspects of training.

Introducing Your Kitten to Other Cats

Introducing a new kitten can be stressful to cats already living in your home. Here are some tips to help:

- Try to make the introduction as gradual as possible. Initially separate the new kitten from other cats by confining it to a separate room/area of the house or keeping it in a cage or crate. This will allow your other cats to hear and smell the new kitten without any direct interaction. This isolation should be maintained until your kitten is tested for FeLV and FIV.
- Once your other cats have adjusted to the presence of the new cat, supervised interaction is recommended. Continue isolating the new kitten at any times when you aren't able to provide direct supervision.
- Be certain to give plenty of attention to your older cats, as cats will often become jealous of attention given to a new kitten.
- Be sure to provide enough litter boxes. One more litter box than the number of cats is recommended. This is the best way to prevent cats from urinating outside the box, a problem that commonly occurs when a new cat is introduced.

Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc.

1404 Old State Route 74

Batavia, Ohio 45103

513-732-1730

www.ClermontAnimal.net

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