



Campbelltown Veterinary Hospital

Veterinary Surgeons

Gary Ashton B.V.Sc. Dip. Appl.Sc.

Lisa Henshaw B.V.Sc. MANZCVS (Behaviour)

15 Chamberlain Street

(P.O. Box 663)

www.campbelltownvet.com.au

email: ctownvet@bigpond.net.au

Phone: (02) 4626 4222

Fax: (02) 4628 2322

YOUR NEW KITTEN



Congratulations on your new arrival. Cats can make ideal household pets, being highly intelligent, playful and amusing companions. They are also relatively independent and require less space and attention than most popular dog breeds. However they rely on you to provide them with shelter, food and affection. This article will outline a basic program of care for your kitten in order for them to reach their maximum potential for growth, health and general well being. Please feel free to ask us anything else about your kitten's health or behaviour.

Worming

- Internal parasites can cause poor growth, diarrhoea and increased susceptibility to bowel infections. Worm eggs passed into the environment can cause public health problems and perpetuate the worms' life cycle.
- There are several excellent products available from us. We usually recommend monthly Advocate, a spot on preparation, in combination with 3 monthly tape-worming tablets. Alternatively, all-worming tablets such as Popantel[®] or Drontal[®] can be given at 6,8,10,12,16,20 and 24 weeks of age then every 3 months thereafter.
- Heartworm infection is rarely a problem in cats but either Advocate[®] or Revolution[®] spot on products will protect your cat from this as well as some other parasites.

Vaccination

- Unvaccinated cats are vulnerable to a number of potentially lethal infectious diseases that can be transmitted via carrier animals or their environment. Vaccination helps to protect against disease caused by these viruses.
- Vaccination is available against: Feline enteritis (a rapidly fatal viral gastro-enteritis mainly affecting young cats or causing abortion or birth deformities in kittens of pregnant queens), Feline Viral Respiratory disease ("Cat flu" in cats of any age mostly due to Feline Herpes virus or Feline Calicivirus; causes sneezing, coughing, ocular and nasal discharge and ulceration of the eyes and mouth, which is rarely fatal but may become chronic or recurrent), Feline Leukaemia (a viral disease that attacks the immune system and can lead to recurrent or chronic illnesses or cancer), Feline Chlamydia (a bacterial disease mainly causing conjunctivitis and other flu' like symptoms) and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus ("FIV", a viral disease similar to HIV which attacks and weakens the body's immune system, making the animal susceptible to infections and diseases that don't affect healthy cats).
- Regular vaccination also allows us to monitor your cat's general health. A 12-system body examination is included in the price of our vaccinations.
- Please check with our staff for the recommended vaccination protocol for the age and lifestyle of your kitten. The vaccines above are usually administered as an F3 (Feline enteritis virus, Feline Herpes Virus and Feline Calicivirus) at 6 weeks of age, two doses of



F6 (all components above) three weeks apart over the age of 8 weeks followed by an FIV booster 2-3 weeks later. If your kitten is over the age of 6 months it will need a blood test prior to starting the FIV vaccination. A socially isolated cat may not require FIV vaccination.

Nutrition

- Cats are carnivores and require certain nutrients such as taurine, arachadonic acid and “preformed Vitamin A” that are only available from a diet based on animal protein. However meat-only diets do not provide the required balance of nutrients, especially calcium, and can lead to severe bony diseases.
- Cats are not naturally fussy eaters but constant variety of diet and feeding table scraps can make them selective about their food preferences or even lead to intestinal upsets. We recommend a premium quality dry food appropriate for the age and lifestyle of your cat. Cats do not need tinned food. Dry food is cheaper, more convenient and promotes healthier teeth and gums than tinned or semi-moist products. If you have a personal preference for tinned foods, always mix some dry food in as well.
- When changing your cat’s diet start by mixing a little of the new food in with the old then gradually increase the amount of new food over a week or more.
- Many cats like to “graze” on their food throughout the day, but some cats will overeat if fed ad-lib. You may prefer to feed your cat several small meals instead.
- We recommend Hills Science Diet Kitten[®] food until your cat is fully grown. Then we recommend Hills Science diet Adult[®], IAMS Cat[®] food or Advance Adult[®]. These diets contain premium ingredients, nutrients that maximize growth and energy requirements of you cat, produce less waste and are guaranteed for taste and quality.
- No additional supplements are required if feeding any of the above products or any other balanced diet. If your cat is sick or stressed or fed a home-prepared diet we may recommend vitamin and/or mineral supplementation.



Desexing

- Spaying or neutering should be carried out when the kitten is between 4-6 months for females and 5-8 months for males. Female cats start cycling as day length increases and will continue until Autumn unless pregnant or desexed. Indoor cats may cycle longer due to artificial light.
- Desexed cats are less likely to fight, which lessens the likelihood of bite wounds, abscesses and contagious diseases such as FIV. They are also less likely to wander, so make better companions and are less likely to be hit by a car. Diseases of the reproductive organs, including some cancers, can be prevented. Desexed cats are less territorial so less inclined to spray urine in or around the house.
- The surgery is not really expensive; prices vary according to age and reproductive status. We only use high quality anaesthetics, materials and surgical techniques, including anaesthetic monitoring equipment. Take advantage of our desexing subsidy for cats less than 8 months of age. You will also receive a significant discount for council registration.
- This is a positive step that you can make to help reduce the number of unwanted kittens in our community.

Flea and Tick Control

- Fleas are difficult parasites to control. They can carry a range of infectious diseases that can impact your cat’s health and/or cause allergic dermatitis, which is irritating for your cat and can be difficult to treat. Fleas also act as the intermediate host for the common tapeworm and can spread *Eperythrozoon felis* a blood-borne parasite than destroys red blood cells.

- We recommend parasite control that affects the life cycle of the flea at more than one point; for example a product that kills adult fleas and renders eggs infertile. Products we supply include Advocate[®], Advantage[®], Frontline[®] or Revolution[®]. These are easily applied to the skin behind the neck once a month.
- Paralysis ticks are not common in the Campbelltown area, but if you take your cat into a tick area (ask a local vet) you should apply Frontline 2 days before entering, then reapply every 14 days in the area and for 14 days after leaving. Check your cat daily and remove any ticks using a tick hook (available here).

Dental care

- Your kitten's temporary teeth will begin to loosen and fall out from about 12 weeks of age. By 6-7 months of age the full set of 30 adult teeth should be through the gums and in wear. These teeth need to last your cat a lifetime.
- Plaque can build up at the tooth-gum margin, which can lead to gingivitis (inflamed/infected gums), periodontal disease (erosion of the ligaments and bone holding the teeth in position) and loss of teeth. Dental disease causes very bad breath, pain, trouble eating and general ill health.
- The best preventative against dental disease is daily brushing. Flavoured toothpastes and gentle finger brushes are available from us. However we realise brushing is not suitable for everybody (or every cat) so there are alternatives. Some of the antibacterial gels may be used once daily with or without brushing. Breathalyser[®] is a product that may be added to your cat's drinking water to help control bad breath. Regular chewing on Greenies, hard food or raw bones such as chicken wings can help mechanically clean the teeth.
- We examine your cat's mouth during every 6 monthly check up. If there is evidence of dental disease they may require a dental scale and polish and possibly extractions. This is done under general anaesthesia, usually only requiring one day in hospital. It is better for your cat (and more economical) to get this done when the problem is first noticed than to wait for it to get worse. Some cats will need regular treatment to prevent serious periodontal disease and tooth loss.

Identification and Registration

- NSW councils require cats to be micro-chipped by 12 weeks of age or at change of ownership, whichever occurs first. The microchip is permanently inserted underneath the skin between the shoulder blades. The identification number is registered with the NSW Companion animal register and your local council. If your cat is found and taken to a vet or local pound, it will be scanned and you will be contacted via the database information. Please keep this information current. Forms are available at reception.
- You must register your kitten with your local council by 6 months of age. There is a once only fee for lifetime registration.

Insurance

- There are several companies that offer health insurance for animals. We strongly recommend you investigate this option. Ask us if you need assistance with options available. The premiums may seem expensive but you never know when you might need it. Because the government does not subsidise veterinary fees, if your cat incurs a serious illness or accident it could otherwise cost you a lot of money.

Grooming

- Most shorthaired cats require very little grooming, as they do a very good job themselves. It is still a good idea to get your kitten used to regular grooming and handling in case you need to do it in the future. When cats are shedding their coat it is helpful to brush them daily to prevent hairballs (accumulation of hair in the gastrointestinal tract which may cause obstructions or vomiting) and keep your house cleaner.

- Longhaired cats require frequent grooming to prevent hairballs and uncomfortable matted hair. Special diets are also available to help prevent hairballs in longhaired cats.
- Older cats may require more frequent grooming as they may have difficulty doing it themselves.
- Ask our advice for the most suitable grooming tools for your cat; usually a brush, comb or rubber mitt.
- Most cats object to bathing, but sometimes it may need to be done for skin problems or hygiene reasons. It is best to accustom your kitten to this whilst young. We can recommend a gentle shampoo. Don't use human products on your cat, as the skin pH is not equivalent between the species.

Toilet training

- Most kittens are easy to litter train because they are naturally clean animals. Keep the litter tray clean, as this encourages the kitten to use it and decreases the risk of spreading diseases such as Toxoplasmosis.



- There are various types of litter trays available, from plain trays to covered ones with cat flaps on the entrance. Make sure your kitten is comfortable using the tray and whichever substrate you choose (eg. silicone beads, clumping litter, recycled paper or sand). We stock a silicone litter which only needs to have the faeces removed regularly and absorbs urine for up to a month between changes. It also absorbs odours very effectively.
- In multicat households you should have one more litter tray than the number of cats. Keep the trays in more than one location in low traffic areas of the house for privacy.
- Cats that urinate infrequently are more susceptible to urinary tract disease such as cystitis or urethral obstruction. Therefore it

is important for them to have a clean, accessible litter tray available at all times, even if they sometimes go outside.

Housing and transport

- All cats should be locked up at night to decrease the risk to native animals and themselves. Contrary to popular belief, cats can be kept entirely indoors (with access to some natural sunlight) or in a cat enclosure outside with adequate shelter. They will be safe from dangers such as traffic, dogs and other cats (which may fight or spread disease). It is important that these cats receive adequate exercise and mental stimulation.
- Toys for kittens are easy to make. Most cats love a scrunched up paper ball, squeaky toy or anything on a string. Be careful that they don't ingest the string though, as it can cause a dangerous intestinal obstruction. Catnip gardens or pot plants are also popular additions.
- Sleeping shelves up high make great resting places for cats, particularly in a position to receive some gentle sunlight. (Cats with white ears or noses should be kept out of the sun in high UV hours). Alternatively, animal sunscreen is available here.
- Purchase a good quality cat carrier now and acclimatise your kitten to it now. It should last a lifetime and will make trips to the vet and other places safer and more pleasant.

