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feline factsheet

This factsheet will give you some valuable information regarding your lovable pet and some of the services we provide. We hope this will help you make a major contribution to your pet's longevity, happiness and quality of life by providing him/her with good nutrition, loving attention in a safe, clean environment and regular checkups at the veterinary practice.

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Your kitten's basic "healthcheck"

Your kitten should visit the veterinary surgeon as soon as possible. The first visit will probably include:

- **Physical examination** to determine his state of health
- **Parasite check** (fleas, ticks, lice, ear mites, worms)
- **Initial vaccination/discussion** of the types of vaccinations your kitten needs and when they should be scheduled
- **Discussion** about whether your kitten should be neutered and when
- **Information and advice** on your kittens immediate diet and care

Checkups

Your first visit will create a "knowledge base" from which, on subsequent checkups throughout your kitten's life we can better evaluate, monitor and manage your pet's health.

Neutering

We believe that spaying or neutering not only helps solve serious problems of a burgeoning population of unwanted cats but also makes for friendlier, easier to live with pets. Spayed female cats are more relaxed, playful and affectionate, while male castrated cats are calmer and less likely to “spray”/urine mark their territory, wander away from home or fight. Sterilisation has health benefits- it minimises the risk of mammary cancer in females and prostate problems in males.

Spaying removes the uterus and ovaries of the female cat, usually around the age of 6 months. A major surgical procedure it is performed under general anaesthesia. Complications are rare and recovery is normally complete within 10 days

Castration also carried out under general anaesthesia removes the testicles of the male cat. The small wounds that result usually heal in about a week; less complicated than spaying it is often performed when the cat is 5-6 months old.

Vaccinations

Our policy is to vaccinate all kittens at 9 and 12 weeks of age. This will give a solid immunity against the two viral causes of “cat flu” and feline infectious enteritis. These are important life threatening conditions that are easily prevented. Another infectious disease called feline leukaemia virus or FeLV can be included for kittens most at risk – ask us regarding this issue. Full immunity has developed by seven days after the second injection. At vaccination a full free health check of the animal is carried out to detect any problems in the early stages. This vaccination course must be followed up annually with a booster injection.

Worming

All kittens are born with an infestation of *Toxocara cati*, common roundworm. They acquire these through the queen’s milk. All kittens should previously have been wormed at two, five and eight weeks old. The next treatment is at twelve weeks old and then at six months old. We recommend Panacur granules should be used as a three day course which will specifically target roundworms. At six months of age tapeworm treatment is advised. Tapeworms are acquired from ingestion of fleas, lice and carrion. We recommend Drontal Cat tablets for the control of tapeworms and roundworms in adult cats every three months. More frequent worming may be required for hunting cats. Also available now are spot-on treatments for wormers as well as fleas and lice.

Fleas

Fleas are the most common ectoparasite of cats. A frustrating problem where we believe prevention is better than cure. Only 5% of the flea population is adult feeding intermittently on your pet, 95% are immature in the form of eggs, larvae and pupae all in your house. Each female flea can lay up to 50 eggs a day. Fleas can cause a variety of problems:

- Skin irritation in cats (and humans!)
- Flea allergic dermatitis
- Transmission of tapeworms
- Anaemia in severe cases

We can supply a variety of flea products both for prevention and treatment as well as household sprays. Advances in treatments of spot-on now mean we can use drops for fleas that also prevent mites, lice, ticks and even worms.

Feeding

A dry complete kitten diet is the ideal choice. A brand called Hills Science Plan is superior and contains a balance of nutrients including vitamins and minerals. This can be fed until 12 months of age. Water must be available at all times. If you are changing diets do this gradually over a period of seven days.

Microchipping

This is a method by which your cat can be identified and returned to you if he or she should go missing, escape or be stolen at any time. A tiny capsule containing a bar-type code is implanted by a single injection in the scruff of the neck. Your pet's number is stored on a national database, and if the number is read by a scanner, you can be quickly reunited with your pet.

Your Geriatric Cat

The best time to start caring for your ageing cat is when they are a kitten. Starting off your cat's life with good nutrition, scheduled veterinary appointments and a happy home life sets the foundations for a high quality of life in older years. Most cats are considered geriatric by the age of 8-10. Much like humans age takes its toll on vital organ functions are your cat ages. Cats are much more subtle than dogs in showing you when they are sick or in pain. Paying attention to your cat's behaviour will make detecting problems easier and help them live healthy lives well into their teens.

What you can do at home:

- Check your cat's mouth, eyes or ear regularly. Watch for loose teeth, redness, swelling or discharge
- Keep your cats sleeping area clean and warm
- Make fresh water available at all times
- Maintain a regime of proper nutrition and loving attention

Common Problems

Obesity

Obesity is a big health risk. An older cat is a less active cat, so adjustments to your cat's diet to reduce the caloric intake are essential. This will relieve pressure on joints as well as manage the risks of heart failure, kidney or liver disease, digestive problems and more. Other changes to nutrition should include increasing fibre, fatty acids and vitamins while decreasing phosphorus, sodium, protein and fat.

Diabetes

Diabetes is common especially in older cats. It is a disease in which your cat's pancreas can no longer produce enough of the hormone insulin.

Arthritis

Arthritis severity can range from slight stiffness to debilitation. You may detect this problem when he/she becomes less attentive about grooming and litter box habits. These signs may also indicate the slowing down of cognitive functions. Anti-inflammatory medication can help relieve the pain. Your veterinary surgeon will prescribe any necessary medication.

Dental

Tooth loss or decay not only makes it harder to chew but also increases the likelihood of infection or tumours. Cats are very sensitive to oral pain. Brushing and cleaning the teeth will keep tartar, gum disease and gingivitis at bay.

Constipation

Constipation may point to colon problems or hairballs. A diet that is easily digestible and rich in nutrients is essential.

Skin/ Coat Problems

Skin/ Coat Problems in ageing cats means the skin loses elasticity, making your pet more susceptible to injury while the coat hair thins and dulls over time. Regular grooming to maintain the coat's lustre and fatty acid supplements are highly beneficial.

Colds and Infections

Frequent colds and infections may indicate an impaired immune system. Bring your cat in for a check up where we may suggest a test for Feline Leukaemia Virus and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus.

Increased Thirst

Increased Thirst is a possible sign of diabetes, kidney failure or hyperthyroidism. These diseases can be easily diagnosed by a simple blood sample, which can be analysed on our in-house biochemistry machine or via a local laboratory. This will determine the problem and allow our vets to prescribe the appropriate medication.