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KITTEN/CAT CARE RECOMMENDATIONS

Vaccinations: Continue vaccinations every 3-4 weeks until 16 weeks old. The final 2 boosters should be given after 12 weeks of age to ensure a strong immune response.

FeLV/FIV testing: We recommend this simple blood test for all kittens coming from unknown background, or with a mother that has not been tested to ensure that they are not carrying these fatal and highly contagious diseases. Symptoms of these diseases are sometimes not seen until later in life. Feline Leukemia vaccination is recommended for all kittens that may have ANY outdoor exposure, after they have already tested negative.

Internal Parasites:

- Kittens should be routinely dewormed every 2- 4 weeks for at least 4 treatments to eliminate common internal parasites. Please give the Strongid dewormer as prescribed.
- Please bring a fecal sample in the coming week for analysis to ensure all parasites are being treated.

Nutrition: We recommend Hill's "Ideal Balance" or other high-quality kitten food, fed twice daily (three times daily for kittens less than 3 months of age). A scant ¼ cup of dry food twice daily, plus a small canned-food treat daily is recommended life-long. At 1-year of age, your kitten should be transitioned to a high quality adult maintenance diet. We highly recommend Hill's T/D (Tartar Diet) - this food is excellent nutritionally, and reduces tartar and gum disease by 50-70% by gently scrubbing the teeth every time your cat chews. Feeding this diet is an easy way to preserve oral health in your cat, when brushing teeth may be difficult.

Flea/Parasite Control: Outdoor cats and kittens should have monthly [Revolution](#) applied topically to prevent fleas and internal parasites year-round. Indoor-only cats may not need preventive flea and parasite control and should be combed weekly with a flea comb. If fleas, or flea dirt are found, the cat should be treated for a minimum of 3 months consecutively to eradicate any potential infestation. Households with dogs or young children should consider use of flea and parasite control year-round on their indoor-only cats.

Spaying/Neutering: Male cats should be neutered, and female cats should be spayed between 5-6 months of age. In addition to helping limit the severe pet overpopulation crisis, spaying and neutering helps to prevent urine marking and other undesirable behaviors in males, and the protracted "yowling" of female cats in heat.

Dental Care: Healthy adult cats should receive their first prophylactic dental cleaning starting at 4 years of age.

Permanent Identification: We recommend that a microchip be placed under your kitten's skin to help ensure that she is rapidly returned to you if ever lost. This can be done at the time of spaying/neutering if being done at 5-6 months of age, or can be done at one of the early kitten visits in animals where spay/neuter is going to be postponed. A microchip is recommended even for kittens that are not intended to go outdoors.

Indoor- only vs. indoor- outdoor lifestyle: We recommend that you consider keeping your cat indoors only, as do many employees of veterinary hospitals. On average, indoor cats live much longer lives, and have many fewer traumas and medical problems than cats who go outdoors. Cats can live very full and enjoyable lives indoors only. The "Indoor Pet Initiative" on the Ohio State University webpage (indoorpet.osu.edu) has great information about enriching the environment for your indoor cat. Cats that are allowed outdoors can be kept safer by establishing a routine of coming in at night, when most cases of trauma occur.

Pet Health Insurance: Now is the time to investigate Pet Health Insurance if you have any interest. The website, petinsurancereview.com is an excellent resource.

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Behavior:

Litterbox training and care: The vast majority of kittens take to the litterbox on their own. Litterboxes should be placed in a safe, easily-accessible location and should be easy for your cat to use (some cats prefer an open-box rather than a covered-box). We recommend fine, clumping, *unscented, dust-free* cat litter. There should be one litterbox per cat in the home, plus one additional. Feces and urine should be scooped daily to encourage good, ongoing litterbox use.

Scratching behavior and claw care: Cats and kittens **NEED** to scratch- it is part of their innate nature. It is important to provide various scratching objects, and to appropriately train your kitten where and where-not to scratch. Traditional vertical scratching posts and horizontal scratching surfaces (made of sisal-cord, carpet, or cardboard) should be placed prominently in the home environment where cats want to scratch. If your kitten is scratching furniture, a squirt of water from a spray bottle each time your kitten approaches this area is usually the most effective deterrent. Temporarily covering particularly attractive pieces of furniture (tinfoil, carpet runner) will help discourage scratching here until your kitten is trained. Try to match the scratching posts/ objects that you offer, to your cats individual scratching preferences. We also recommend trimming your kitten's toenails monthly to help prevent damage around the house- this is not a difficult procedure and we are happy to demonstrate! Much more information is available at indoorpet.osu.edu.

Playtime: Kittens have exuberant energy and need constructive playtime to prevent unwanted behaviors. Throwing small toys (may kittens will quickly learn to fetch), having kittens chase the sash of a bathrobe or other thick cord, and using a small flashlight or laser pointer on the wall (not in the eyes!) all work very well. Prevent access to rubber bands, and small toys that kittens may swallow. Also prevent access to string, thread, dental floss, tinsel/ribbon- these commonly cause intestinal obstruction, requiring surgery, if swallowed. Kittens may occasionally "attack" our hands/feet- this is rarely true aggression but truly just exuberant play behavior. Simply end the interaction and re-direct your kitten to more appropriate play objects.

Other Resources: Much more information about health and behavior issues can be found at the following websites

- <https://indoorpet.osu.edu/cats>
- <http://www.vet.cornell.edu/fhc/>
- You can find links to these sites and other helpful information at our own website: Fairhavenvet.com