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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 feeding high-quality kitten food 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 Plus](#) applied topically to prevent fleas and internal parasites year-round. Indoor-only cats are still able to be infested by fleas travelling into the home through walls (apartments and duplexes), on shoes or clothing and on other pets (dogs or indoor-outdoor cats). Households with young children or immunocompromised persons are strongly recommended to keep all pets on year-round parasite and flea protection to prevent human health concerns.

**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 increased "yowling" of female cats in heat.

**Dental Care:** Healthy adult cats should receive their first comprehensive dental exam and 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. 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](http://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](http://petinsurancereview.com) is an excellent resource for comparing coverage and premiums.

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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, Feliscratch© is a proven product containing catnip and appeasing pheromones which can be applied to appropriate scratching areas to train your cat or kitten to scratch where you want them to. It does take a little time, but positively rewarding them when they scratch in the right place will encourage them to continue that behavior. Try to match the scratching posts/ objects that you offer, to your cats individual scratching preferences. For example if they prefer to scratch on the carpet, provide a carpeted scratching post. We also recommend trimming your cat'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 [FearFreeHappyHomes.com](http://FearFreeHappyHomes.com) and [IndoorPet.osu.edu](http://IndoorPet.osu.edu).

**Playtime:** Kittens have exuberant energy and need constructive playtime to prevent unwanted behaviors. Throwing small toys (many 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://fearfreehappyhomes.com/>
- <https://indoorpet.osu.edu/cats>
- <http://www.vet.cornell.edu/fhc/>
- You can find links to these sites and other helpful information at our website: [Fairhavenvet.com](http://Fairhavenvet.com)

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