

Lake Harriet Veterinary

Integrative Pet Care

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Frequently Asked Questions About Kittens

What is the best way to houstrain my kitten?

Most kittens are litter box trained by the time you take them home. If you have more than one cat we recommend one litter box per cat plus one extra. Covered litter boxes tend to trap in offensives smells which may be an aversion for some cats. When choosing a litter the most important factor is choosing one your cat will like, so experiment a little. Scoop litter boxes daily and completely dump the litter and scrub the box every 1-2 weeks using hot water and natural cleaner. Be sure to place litter boxes in quiet out-of-the-way places so your cat will have some privacy.

How do I keep my cat from scratching?

Scratching is a normal activity in cats and kittens—and in short, you can't keep your cat or kitten from scratching. But you can try to modify where and what they scratch. In order to minimize damage to you and your furniture, be sure to trim you kitten's nails on a regular basis and encourage the use of a scratching post. Experiment with the types of surfaces your kitten prefers and use those to construct a scratching post. Some people have also found it helpful to cover their furniture with cloth, double-sided tape, or even foil until their kitten is trained to the scratching post. We do not recommend declawing due to the potential medical and behavioral complications.

How do I trim my kitten's nails?

It is a good idea to start trimming kitten's nails when they are first brought into the house. Purchase a good quality nail trimmer and a product called quick stop. Begin by trimming off the last 1-2 millimeters of the claw a couple of times over the course of a week. Avoid trimming the "quick" or the pink part of the nail that provides its blood supply. If bleeding occurs you can push the quick stop into the nail to stop the bleeding. If you do not have quick stop on hand you can use corn meal, or flour. Always give your kitten a reward of verbal praise or treat immediately after finishing. Most people trim them every few weeks to keep the nails from getting razor sharp.

What type of cat food should I feed and how often?

In terms of feeding schedule, we recommend feeding kittens at specific times of the day. A measured amount of food should be offered 3-4 times a day to a kitten 6-20 weeks of age. What is not eaten after 15-20 minutes should be taken away. After 6 months of age 2 meals will be sufficient for most cats. Many of the bagged and canned cat foods available do provide a balanced diet, however, there are certain foods we will recommend as better choices. Please see our list of recommended foods which we have listed on our resources page. Always allow cats and dogs 24-hour access to fresh water.

What are appropriate toys for my cat?

Some cats enjoy crumpled paper balls, crinkly balls, mouse or realistic prey animal toys, and anything that can be batted around. Others like things that fly through the air on a wand or on an automated arm. Laser pointers are a favorite for many cats and the ultimate toy may be the presence of another cat or dog companion. It is important to make sure that toys are not too small as to become lodged in the stomach and cause an obstruction.

Should I get a microchip for my kitten?

When considering a microchip for your pet you should know the following facts: More than 10 million pets are lost each year; 50% of dogs and 75% of cats arrive at shelters without collars; over 20,000 pets have been returned to their owners through the HomeAgain® system. A microchip is a pet retrieval system that involves injecting a small microchip, about the size of a grain of rice, under the skin between the shoulder blades of a dog or cat in much the same way a vaccine is administered. Each chip has a unique digit code that must be registered with the AKC's program. When a lost pet arrives at a shelter or veterinary clinic a special handheld scanner is passed over the shoulder blades. The scanner can read the identification number and the shelter can then notify the AKC and the pet's owner or a veterinarian.

What can we do for fleas and ticks?

Fleas are small, wingless, blood sucking parasites that can spread disease (Bartonellosis) and cause anemia in kittens and cats. There are several excellent flea-repelling medications (Frontline, Program, etc.) available for cats that are prone to fleas or have allergies to them. However, we generally do not advocate these medications unless a cat has visible signs of fleas or has had problems with them in the past. When fleas are present on a kitten it is essential that owners clean up the home environment to eliminate flea eggs before they hatch. Ticks are not a concern for urban cats and Lyme disease is rare in the species. We do not recommend prevention directed at ticks.





Do I need to give my kitten medication for worms?

Eighty-five percent of all kittens have intestinal parasites or worms, and some of these present serious health concerns to children who can be infected with them. Therefore it is imperative that everyone washes his or her hands after playing with your kitten. At your initial visit we will evaluate a stool sample for parasites and start your kitten on an intestinal parasite control program as recommended by the Center for Disease Control. Additional fecal exams may be recommended at a later date if your kitten develops diarrhea or vomiting. We will also recommend an annual fecal exam to screen for parasites throughout the life of your pet.

What is the best way to socialize my kitten?

The socialization period for kittens is between 4 and 12 weeks of age, and we encourage you to expose your cat to as many types of social events and influences as possible during that time. If a cat has good experiences with various men, women, children, cats, dogs, etc., it is likely to accept them throughout life. If the experiences are unpleasant or even absent, cats may become apprehensive and extremely difficult to socialize later in life.

How do I want my cat and children to interact?

Having children and a kitten/cat at the same time can be a challenge. Children often match a kitten's energy level and it can be difficult to convince your children that a kitten needs his/her quiet time. In fact, you may spend more time teaching your children what is appropriate behavior around a kitten than vice versa. We encourage parents to actively involve children in playtime, socializing, and feeding of the new kitten so they learn mutual respect. One of the most frequently encountered problems with kittens is their interest in chewing and scratching on the hands, feet, and ears of children. It is very important that children do not encourage this behavior by continuing to give a kitten attention (playing, giggling, pushing her away, etc.) when this happens. Have children stop playing with a kitten when he/she gets too rough and is biting too hard. This will let the kitten know that biting is not an acceptable way to play, and that he/she will not get attention (i.e., rewarded) for that behavior. In addition, do not pet your kitten in short strokes on the head or face as that generally results in biting and scratching.

Do I need to worry about heartworm disease?

Heartworms are large, thread-like worms that live in the heart of infected cats. Mosquitoes transmit heartworm disease and infected cats can develop coughing, lethargy, and serious heart disease. Alternatively, some evidence shows that most cats can live a normal lifespan as infected individuals. Given the current research we cannot recommend testing for and prevention of feline heartworm disease because the incidence is so low. There is no currently labeled treatment for feline heartworm disease. For more information visit the heartworm society website at www.heartwormsociety.org.

Special Considerations for the Outdoor Cat

Cats that spend time outdoors—whether supervised or not—are at far greater risk for contracting infectious diseases, intestinal parasites, external parasites, and injuries than those cats that are kept indoors. Listed below are the more common threats and ways to protect your cat and family members.

Intestinal Parasites: Outdoor cats can become infested with intestinal parasites by hunting prey or coming into contact with already infected feces. Signs of intestinal parasites include diarrhea, dull coat, vomiting, pale gum color, anorexia and a pot-bellied appearance. If left untreated, intestinal parasites can result in a variety of health problems from anemia and malabsorption which may make the cat more susceptible to bacterial and viral infections.

External Parasites: External parasites are those parasites that live on the outside of the cat like fleas, ear mites, ticks and chewing lice. These parasites live on the cat and feed on its blood. When left untreated, fleas can cause discomfort to the cat, skin problems and anemia. In the case of a large flea outbreak it is not uncommon for them to bite people. Ear mites live in the ear canals and are very itchy and uncomfortable and can cause hearing loss and self-mutilation.

Feline Leukemia (FeLV) and FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus): Feline Leukemia and FIV are viruses that affect the immune system of a cat. These viruses can be spread by direct contact such as fighting, mutual grooming, or nursing. Testing your young cat or kitten is vital in determining if your cat is infected with or a carrier of these viruses. There are no cures for these viruses, but there is a vaccine to protect against FeLV.

Impact on wildlife, poisoning and injury: The cat that is left outside unsupervised poses a negative impact on wildlife due to hunting. The songbird population can be greatly affected by the presence of even one cat in a neighborhood. The outdoor cat is also at greater risk to being hit by a car, animal attacks, and toxic ingestion. Outdoor cats benefit from wearing some form of identification or being microchipped if they become lost or injured.





Commercial Food Recommendations

Commercial pet foods come in a dizzying array of shapes, colors, textures, and qualities. We have attempted to compile a list of recommended foods in terms of their wholesomeness, lack of additives, high digestibility, and availability. While this list cannot be all-inclusive it is meant as a starting point for selecting a quality food. For animals with specific health issues, this selection should be discussed with your veterinarian.

Our opinion is that the ideal diet for your pet is a fresh, well-balanced, home-prepared diet. While this is not a feasible option for everyone and is not without a few contraindications, if you are interested in a home-prepared diet, you should discuss the options with a veterinarian who is both open to, and has experience with, these diets.

There are a variety of commercially available preparations of raw meat, bone, fruits, and vegetables, ground into convenient patties or cubes and frozen; some are even freeze-dried. These approximate the quality of a home made food and are well balanced. Examples:

- BARF patties – www.barfworld.com (Raw frozen)
- Nature's Variety – www.naturesvariety.com (Raw frozen)
- Primal Pet Foods – www.primalpetfoods.com (Raw frozen)
- Woody's Pet Food Deli – www.woodypetdeli.com (Freshly prepared pet food. Local.)

European-style pet foods consist of grains, herbs and nuts. Water, fresh meat, and vegetables must be added to balance these diets. Example:

Sojourner Farms – www.sojos.com (Local)

Here are some good options for commercially prepared dry and canned foods:

- California Natural – www.naturapet.com
- Canidae or Felidae – www.canidae.com
- Honest Kitchen – www.thehonestkitchen.com (Dehydrated food. Add water.)
- Innova – www.naturapet.com
- Merrick – www.merrickpetfood.com
- Nature's Variety – www.naturesvariety.com
- Solid Gold – www.solidgoldhealth.com
- Wellness – www.wellnesspetfood.com

Retail Stores:

Bone Adventure – Multiple metro locations

Calhoun Pet Supply – 612-824-1094 – corner of 36th & Bryant Ave. S., Mpls

Chuck & Don's Pet Food Outlet – Multiple metro locations

It's A Pet's Life – 763-476-7372 – 1115 Vicksburg Lane N., Plymouth

Lulu and Luigi – 952-929-5858 – 3844 Grand Way, St. Louis Park

Pet Stuff – 952-930-9383 – 14665 Excelsior Blvd., Minnetonka

Urban Tails – 612-879-0709 – 2106 Lyndale Ave. S., Mpls

Twin Cities Natural Food Co-ops – Multiple metro locations

Woody's Pet Food Deli – 612-208-0335 – 3008 W 50th St., Mpls



Recommended Feline Vaccination Guidelines

A widespread feline vaccination program has played a crucial role in the prevention of infectious diseases in veterinary medicine. As pets have assumed a different role in the modern family and risk factors have changed the vaccination schedule has changed accordingly. As a holistically focused practice we seek a compromise between maximizing immunity to diseases and minimizing possible short and long-term side effects from vaccines. The risk versus benefit of using certain vaccines or of administering multiple vaccines at the same visit every year needs to be strongly reconsidered. Cats in particular can have a uncommon and poorly understood reaction to certain components in vaccines which in the worst cases can result in the formation of a cancerous tumor. In addition, there are studies that now show the duration of immunity from many vaccines is much longer than one year. When we consider if a cat should be vaccinated its health, age, risk of exposure, lifestyle, and past medical and vaccination history are important variables to assess.

The following vaccine protocol is our general recommendation but it may be modified. It includes the “core” vaccines and should not be interpreted to mean that other protocols recommended by a veterinarian are not valid. It is a matter of professional judgment and choice.

8 weeks of age	Panleukopenia, Rhinotracheitis, and Calicivirus (FVRCP)
12 wks (if needed)	FVRCP and FeLV
16 wks (if needed)	FVRCP and FeLV
16 wks or older	Rabies
1 year	FVRCP (3 yr duration)
1 year	Rabies (1 yr duration)

Adult cats:

We strongly recommend the new Purevax (1-year) rabies vaccine because it is free of the additives they are thought to contribute to side-effects in cats. It is now favored over the older and more common 3-year rabies vaccine.

FVRCP should be given only once every 3 years for most cats. Circumstances may arise in which we recommend it be discontinued altogether.

Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV): All kittens and cats with an unknown FeLV status should be tested for this disease. Feline leukemia is a risk to cats that go outdoors and/or are exposed to infected cats. Kittens with risk of exposure should be given a FeLV vaccine at 12 and 16 weeks, and then annually for an additional 1-2 years.

Other non-core vaccines such as those to protect against chlamydia, feline infectious peritonitis, bordetella, and ringworm are not recommended unless your cat is at high risk of exposure.



Guide To Brushing Your Animal Companion's Teeth

Our animal companions are an important part of our lives for many years, and dental care is crucial in maintaining their good health. Dental disease is the most common problem seen in our pet population today. More than 85% of all dogs and cats over 3 years of age are affected by dental problems. Periodontal disease is not only the cause of your pet's bad breath and painful mouth, but also may result in infections of the kidneys, liver, and heart.

We recommend daily dental care at home for your pet, just like the rest of the family. It is best to begin at an early age (8-12 weeks), but visible tartar should be removed during a thorough dental cleaning.

Supplies needed:

- Soft-bristled toothbrush or inexpensive automatic toothbrush
- Pet toothpaste (*never* human toothpaste)

Week 1: Slowly acquainting your pet with mouth care

Using your hand, gently open your animal companion's mouth and run your finger around the lips. Rub the outside of the mouth and massage the cheeks. This gets her used to having her mouth touched. Begin for thirty seconds on day one and progress to a couple of minutes by the end of the week. Always reward your pet with a small treat at the end of each session.

Week 2: Introducing toothbrush or washcloth (without toothpaste)

This week, use either a wet washcloth wrapped around your index finger or wet toothbrush on the teeth. Lift the lips and massage the outer surfaces of the upper and lower teeth using a back and forth motion. Do this for thirty seconds on day one and progress to three minutes by the end of the week.

Week 3: Add toothpaste and extend brushing time

This week, use your dental cleaning instrument and now add $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of toothpaste to brush the outer surfaces of the upper and lower teeth using a back and forth motion. If possible, try to brush the inner surfaces of the teeth. The inner surfaces are harder to get at but the tartar builds up more quickly on the outer surfaces. Always give a small treat at the end of each session to make it rewarding!

If you find brushing impossible, there are other products you can use to maintain good oral health—but eventually, we will recommend a professional dental cleaning. Below are some examples of products:

- CET chews, Oravet chews, Purina DentaLife, and other dental treats are available for dogs and cats. These are enzymatically treated to help remove bacteria before it builds up and turns to tartar that cannot be removed with simple brushing.
- Specially formulated dental diets are available for dogs and cats. These foods can be used as a regular complete diet or as a treat for patients especially prone to dental disease.
- Some adult dogs may benefit from chewing on pig ears, raw hides, and various treated animal parts. However, this will increase their risk of tooth fractures and excessive wearing of the teeth.



Cat Resources

The following is a list of resources we have collected through word-of-mouth. We have been happy with the quality of service and expertise these individuals have provided and hope you will find the same.

Pet Supply Stores & Boutiques

Bone Adventure – Multiple metro locations

Calhoun Pet Supply – Bryant & 36th – 612-824-1094

It's A Pet's Life – 1115 Vicksburg Lane N Plymouth – 763-476-7372

Lulu and Luigi's – 3699 Joppa Ave, St. Louis Park – 952-929-1200

Pet Stuff – 14655 Excelsior Blvd, Minnetonka – 952-930-9383

Urban Tails Pet Supply – 2106 Lyndale Ave S. – 612-879-0709

Twin Cities Natural Food Co-ops – Multiple metro locations

Pet Sitters

Cat Watchers – 952-920-4980 – 4816 W 82th St. Minneapolis, MN 55437 – www.catwatchers.com

Tails of 2 Cities – 612-822-7389 • tailsof2cities@mn.rr.com

These Paws Were Made for Walking (Betsy Hoyt) – 612-926-3600 – www.these-paws.com

See www.petsittersmn.org – 651-610-0444

Grooming Services

Bubbles and Bows – 6001 Lyndale Ave S. – 612-920-3868

The Groomsman – 313 W 38th St. – 612-822-2397

Wendy's Dog House – 4207 E 54th St. – 612-726-1740

Pet Loss Support & Grief Counselors

Humane Society Pet Loss Support Group – 763-489-2220

Marilyn Erickson – 612-827-7467

University of Minnesota – 612-625-6761 (Main line will direct you)

Professional Carpet Cleaners

Keljik's (next door to our clinic) – 612-823-6338





Toxic Plants for Your Pet

Cardiovascular Toxins

Avocado (leaves, seeds, stem, fruit, skin)* in birds and pocket pets
Azalea (entire rhododendron family)
Autumn crocus (Colchicum autumnale)*
Bleeding heart*
Castor bean*
Foxglove (Digitalis)*
Hyacinth bulbs*
Hydrangea*
Japanese pieris*
Kalanchoe*
Lily-of-the-valley*
Milkweed*
Mistletoe berries*
Mountain laurel
Oleander*
Rosary Pea*
Tobacco Products
Yew*

Gastrointestinal Toxins

Avocado (leaves, seeds, stem, fruit, skin) in dogs
Amaryllis bulb*
Azalea (entire rhododendron family)
Autumn crocus (Colchicum autumnale)*
Bird of Paradise
Bittersweet
Boxwood
Buckeye
Bulbs (most kinds)
Buttercup (Ranunculus)
Caladium
Castor bean*
Chocolate*
Chrysanthemum (a natural source of pyrethrins)
Clematis
Crocus bulb
Croton (Codiaeum species)
Cyclamen bulb
Dumb cane (Dieffenbachia)*
Eggplant
Elephant's ear
English ivy (All Hedera species of ivy)
Hyacinth bulbs
Holly berries
Iris corms
Lily (bulbs of most species)
Macadamia nuts
Mistletoe berries
Narcissus, daffodil (Narcissus)
Onions*
Pencil cactus/plant
Potato (leaves and stem)

Rosary Pea*
Spurge (Euphorbia species)
Tomatoes (leaves and stem)

Respiratory Toxin

Chinese sacred or heavenly bamboo*
English ivy
Neurological Toxins
Amaryllis bulb*
Azalea (entire rhododendron family)
Bleeding heart*
Buckeye
Caffeine
Castor bean*
Chocolate*
Choke cherry, unripe berries*
Chrysanthemum (natural source of pyrethrins)
Crocus bulb
Delphinium, larkspur, monkshood*
Eggplant
Jimson weed*
Lupine species
Macadamia nuts
Marijuana (Cannabis)*
Morning glory*
Moldy foods
Tobacco products
Potato (leaves and stem)
Tomatoes (leaves and stem)

Kidney/Organ Failure Toxins

Amanita mushrooms
Anthurium*
Asiatic lily
Begonia*
Calla lily*
Castor beans
Day lily
Elephant's ear
Easter lily
Grapes/raisins
Jack-in-the-pulpit*
Lantana*
Oak*
Rhubarb leaves*
Schefflera*
Shamrock*
Star-gazer Lilly

Toxins that affect the blood

Onions
Garlic

** Substances that are especially dangerous and can be fatal*