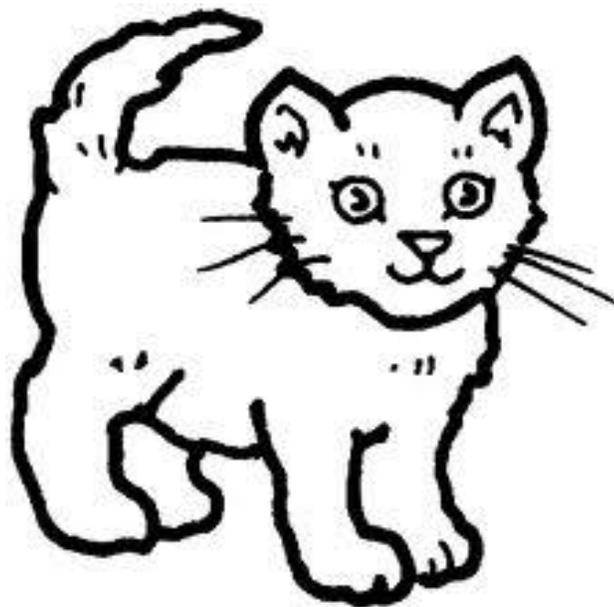


An Introductory Guide to Raising Your Kitten



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Congratulations on your new kitten. Here is a guide to help you raise your new friend! Dr. Rose and Dr. Valley as well as the staff at South Windsor Veterinary Clinic, hope we exceed all of your needs during this challenging and fun time. Don't hesitate to call our office with any extra questions!

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Vaccines and Deworming

At South Windsor Veterinary Clinic, your pet's health and your happiness are our number one priority. We have established a vaccine protocol, which will provide the proper amount of immunity needed to help ensure your pet has a happy and healthy life. The following protocol is subject to some modification depending on your animal's age, and size.

Kittens:

- FeLV/FIV Testing (Feline Leukemia and AIDS): This is done at the first appointment to test for prior exposure to FeLV and FIV.
- FVRCP (feline distemper): This is a series of two vaccines; the first given as early as 6 weeks, followed by a second booster vaccine 3-4 weeks later. After the initial series, annual boosters are required to retain immunity
- FeLV (feline leukemia): This vaccine is a series of two vaccines; the first given as early as 9 weeks and the second booster vaccine 3-4 weeks later. After the initial series, annual boosters are required to retain immunity. As per guidelines established by the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP), we recommended all kittens complete their feline leukemia vaccine series, as kittens are the most susceptible to this disease. After that, we recommend that only cats "at risk" continue getting the vaccine.
- Rabies: Kittens can be vaccinated at 12 weeks of age, and then annually for the rest of their life.
- Deworming: Pyrantel or Drontal are used at the kitten's first two appointments to help eliminate intestinal parasites.



Disease Prevention

Cats can carry diseases and pass them to people; however, you are not likely to get sick from petting or owning a cat. Here are some tips to help keep yourself and your family healthy. Young children and people with compromised immune systems (i.e.) pregnant women, organ transplant recipients, individuals living with HIV or people undergoing chemotherapy) need to be especially careful and should seek out special advice from either the CDC website or their physician.

To protect yourself from cat-related diseases:

1. Wash hands well with soap and running water after handling cat stool and changing litter boxes.
2. Wash hands well after petting cats, especially before eating. This is especially important for children.
3. All sandboxes should be covered to prevent fecal contamination by outdoor cats.
4. Do not allow cats to drink from the toilet.
5. All cats should be vaccinated against rabies
6. Fleas can harbor and transmit *Bartonella*; the causative agent of Cat Scratch disease...appropriate flea control can decrease chance of transmission to people. Fleas also harbor tapeworm eggs.
7. Do not handle cats of which you are unfamiliar, especially if they appear ill.
8. Avoid interactions with cats that may lead to scratches or bites.
9. If you are bitten or scratched by a cat, wash the area with soap and running water right away and call your physician.
10. Provide an annual stool sample from your cat to test for intestinal parasites, we recommend 2-3 stool samples from kittens.

Cats are wonderful additions to our families and these simple steps can help both you and your cat happy and healthy!!

Toxoplasmosis and Pregnancy

Obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website

Toxoplasmosis (Tox-o-plaz-mo-sis) is an infection caused by the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*.

Toxoplasmosis can be spread in several ways:

- Cats play an important role in the spread of toxoplasmosis. They become infected by eating infected rodents, birds, or other small animals. The parasite is then passed in the cat's feces. Cats and kittens prefer litter boxes, garden soils, and sand boxes for elimination, and you may be exposed unintentionally by touching your mouth after changing a litter box, or while gardening without gloves.
- Eating fruits and vegetables if they are not washed or peeled.
- Eating under-cooked meat and even by handling raw meat and not washing your hands afterwards.
- Contaminating food with knives, utensils, cutting boards and other foods that have had contact with raw meat.
- Drinking water that is contaminated.
- Receiving an infected organ transplant or blood transfusion, though this is rare.

Prevention

The best way to protect an unborn child is by protecting the mother against toxoplasmosis.

- Have someone who is healthy and not pregnant change the cat's litter box daily. If this is not possible, wear gloves and clean the litter box every day, because the parasite found in cat feces needs one or more days after being passed to become infectious. Wash hands well with soap and water afterwards.
- Wash hands with soap and water after any exposure to soil, sand, raw meat, or unwashed vegetables.
- Cook all meat thoroughly; that is, to an internal temperature of 160° F and until it is no longer pink in the center or until the juices become colorless. Do not taste meat before it is fully cooked.
- Freeze meat for several days before cooking to greatly reduce the chance of infection.
- Wash all cutting boards and knives thoroughly with hot soapy water after each use.
- Wash and/or peel all fruits and vegetables before eating them.
- Wear gloves when gardening or handling sand from a sandbox. Wash hands well afterward.
- Avoid drinking untreated water, particularly when traveling in less developed countries.

Symptoms

Most people who become infected have no symptoms. Some people who have toxoplasmosis may feel as if they have the "flu" with swollen lymph glands or muscle aches and pains that last for a month or more.

Severe toxoplasmosis, causing damage to the brain, eyes, or other organs, can develop from an acute infection or one that had occurred earlier in life and is now reactivated. Severe cases are more likely in

people who have weak immune systems, though occasionally, even people with healthy immune systems may experience eye damage from toxoplasmosis.

Most infants who are infected while still in the womb have no symptoms at birth, but they may develop symptoms later in life, such as blindness or intellectual disabilities. A small percentage of infected newborns have serious eye or brain damage at birth.

Treatment

Once a diagnosis of toxoplasmosis is confirmed, a health care provider can discuss treatment. For pregnant women or people who have weakened immune systems, medications are available to treat toxoplasmosis.



Spaying and Neutering

Males

Increased testosterone levels in non-neutered male cats can result in the following:

- Urine marking (indoors and outdoors!!)
- Increased roaming
- Increased aggression causing more fighting and possible more risk of infection of Feline Leukemia or F.I.V.
- Escape oriented behavior
- Erratic behavior

Females

Increased hormone levels in non-spayed female cats can result in the following:

- Urine marking
- Increased risk of mammary cancer
- Noisy heat cycles
- Stains on furniture or carpeting
- Solicitous behavior attracting males from long distances
- Unsolicited male suitors at your doorstep
- Increased risk of uterine infection

Kittens can be neutered and spayed starting between three and six months, depending on their size and reproductive development.

Microchipping

When you do come in to have your kitten spayed or neutered, we also offer microchipping services. The brand our clinic uses is called “AVID Friendchip” and is recognized throughout the nation. It is a tiny microchip that can fit in a hypodermic needle. It is injected under the skin, much like a vaccination. This microchip will stay in your pet where it will remain for life. AVID Friendchip is affiliated with PETtrac, a global recovery network with thousands of pets in their database. Once your pet has had the microchip injected, all you need to do is register with the PETtrac database and keep your address updated should you move. There is a one-time fee to register. If your kitten is already spayed or neutered, microchipping can still be done.

If your pet is ever lost (and let’s hope not!!) this microchip can be the priceless identification that brings your pet home to you safely. When your pet is found and brought to a participating shelter or animal hospital he or she will simply be checked with a scanner. When the microchip number is found, the 24-hour hotline is called and the database searched for your pets ID number. At that point, AVID will contact you to pick up your lost pet.



Feline Heartworm Disease

Obtained from the American Heartworm Society website

Heartworm infection takes place when a mosquito carrying infective, microscopic-size heartworm larvae, bites into a cat for a blood meal. The larvae then actively migrate into the new host and develop further as they travel through the subcutaneous tissue in the cat's body. At about 3-4 months, they usually settle into the arteries and blood vessels of the lungs, where they continue to develop to sexual mature male and female worms (*Dirofilaria immitis*). The average time from when the microscopic parasites enter the host until the females develop into mature worms and produce offspring is approximately eight months and is referred to as the prepatent period. This is about one month longer than in dogs.



As adults, the heartworms can mate and the females can release offspring called microfilariae (pronounced: micro-fil-ar-ee-a) into the blood stream. The cycle begins again when a mosquito takes a blood meal from the newly infected cat and draws the microfilariae into its system.

Cats are resistant hosts of heartworms, and microfilaremia, (the presence of heartworm offspring in the blood of the host animal), is uncommon (usually less than 20% of cases). When present, microfilaremia is inconsistent and short-lived. Some cats appear to be able to rid themselves of the infection spontaneously. It is assumed that such cats may have developed a strong immune response to the heartworms, which causes the death of the parasites. These heartworms may die as a result of an inability to thrive within a given cat's body.

Cats typically have fewer and smaller worms than dogs and the life span of worms is shorter, approximately two to three years, compared to five to seven years in dogs. In experimental infections of heartworm larvae in cats, the percentage of worms developing into the adult stage is low (0% to 25%) compared to dogs (40% to 90%).

However, heartworms do not need to develop into adults to cause significant pulmonary damage in cats, and consequences can still be very serious when cats are infected by mosquitoes carrying heartworm larvae. Newly arriving worms and the subsequent death of most of these same worms can result in acute pulmonary inflammation response and lung injury. This initial phase is often misdiagnosed as asthma or allergic bronchitis but in actuality is part of a syndrome now known as Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease (HARD).

Which Cats Are Susceptible?

Although outdoor cats are at greater risk of being infected, a relatively high percentage of cats considered by their owners to be totally indoor pets also become infected. Overall, the distribution of feline heartworm infection in the United States seems to parallel that of dogs but with lower total numbers. There is no predictable age in cats for becoming infected with heartworms. Cases have been reported in cats from nine months to 17 years of age, the average being four years at diagnosis or death.

Clinical Signs

The clinical signs of heartworm infection in cats can be very non-specific, and may mimic many other feline diseases. Diagnosis by clinical signs alone is nearly impossible, but a cat may exhibit generic signs of illness, such as vomiting intermittently (food or foam, usually unrelated to eating), lethargy, anorexia (lack of appetite), weight loss, coughing, asthma-like signs (intermittent difficulty in breathing, panting, open-mouthed breathing), gagging, difficulty breathing (dyspnea) or rapid breathing (tachypnea).

Signs associated the first stage of heartworm disease, when the heartworms enter a blood vessel and are carried to the pulmonary arteries, are often misdiagnosed as asthma or allergic bronchitis, when in fact they are actually due to a syndrome newly defined as **Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease (HARD)**.

Some cats exhibit acute clinical signs, with disease often related to the organs where the adult heartworms are thriving. Occasionally such infected cats die quickly without allowing sufficient time to make a diagnosis or offer appropriate treatment.

Clinical Signs Associated with Feline Heartworm Disease

Acute	Chronic
collapse	coughing
dyspnea	vomiting
convulsions	dyspnea
diarrhea/vomiting	lethargy
blindness	anorexia
tachycardia	weight loss
syncope	chylothorax
sudden death	

Diagnosis

Heartworm infection in cats is harder to diagnose than it is in dogs and it is easy to overlook. Diagnostic tests have limitations, so negative test results do not necessarily rule out an infection.

Antigen tests, for example, only detect adult female or dying male worms. Immature or male-only worm infections are rarely detected.

The diagnostic plan for heartworm disease in cats can include, but is not limited to, a physical examination, radiography (X-ray), echocardiography (ultrasound readings of the heart), angiocardigraphy (X-ray of the heart with injected contrast fluid), CBC (complete blood count), serologic testing (antigen and antibody study), microfilaria testing, and necropsy (after death).

Physical Examination

The results of a physical examination may appear to be perfectly normal in cats infected with heartworms. Harsh lung sounds are a frequent abnormal finding and may be present in cats without any respiratory signs. The presence of a heart murmur or abnormal rhythm is uncommon. Only rarely, have there been reports of ascites (fluid in the abdomen), exercise intolerance and signs of right-sided heart failure. In cats, the primary response to the presence of heartworms occurs in the lungs.

Preventives

It is generally recommended that all cats be tested for both antigens and antibodies (serology) prior to administration of a heartworm preventive. There are four heartworm disease preventive products approved by the FDA for use in cats, Heartgard[®] for Cats (Ivermectin, orally) from Merial, Interceptor[®] (Milbemycin oxime, orally) from Novartis, Revolution[®] (Selamectin, topically) from Pfizer and Advantage Multi[™] for Cats (Moxidectin / imidacloprid, topically) from Bayer. All of these products are considered effective in preventing the development of adult heartworms when administered properly on a monthly basis relative to the period of transmission.

Diet and Exercise

It is very important to provide your kitten a high quality meal at all stages of their life. Since they are growing, they will need a more nutrient-rich food so that their bones and muscles develop properly. When you bring your kitten home, it is best to keep them on the food their breeder or pet store provided to avoid causing an upset stomach while they are settling in. However, if you do decide you want to switch foods, it should be done very gradually and take at least a week to do the complete switch.

Exercise is also very important for your kitten. Giving them toys to play with is a good way to encourage them to be active. We don't recommend giving your kitten string to play with though, and all toys should be checked to make sure they don't have any loose pieces that your kitten could accidentally swallow.





Grooming and Boarding

Below is a list of businesses and people we recommended for your kitten care needs!

Boarding Kennels

- Day Hill Kennels (136 Addison Rd., Windsor) 860-688-2370 (www.dayhillkennels.com)
- Baywood Kennels (10 Moose Meadow Rd., Willington) 860-429-5533 (www.baywoodkennels.com)
- Hidden Acres Kennel (247 Plains Rd., Tolland) 860-871-9272 (<http://tolland.patch.com/listings/hidden-acres-kennel>)
- Candlewick Kennels (2811 Hebron Ave., Glastonbury) 860-633-6878 (www.candlewickkennels.com)

Groomers

- Paw-rific Pet Grooming (597 Vernon St., Manchester) 860-645-3961
- Pupperdoos & Kitties Too (601 Sullivan Ave., S. Windsor) 860-436-6377

We hope this guide helps you to understand how to raise your new kitten. If you have any further questions about raising your kitten, don't hesitate to call our office!

South Windsor Veterinary Clinic

