

Front Range Animal Hospital  
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## Kitten's First Year

Congratulations on your new kitten! With the proper health care, your kitten can be a friend for many years. Here are some important tips to get your kitten started right.

### Vaccinations

Kittens need a series of vaccinations to prevent serious illness, starting at 9 weeks of age. These are the vaccines that we recommend for our patients:

- 9 weeks: **RCP**—Rhinotracheitis, calici virus, panleukopenia (cat distemper)  
**FeLV**—Leukemia, esp.in multi-cat households, cats that go out/escape
- 12 wks: **RCP** booster, +/- **FeLV**
- 16 wks: **RCP** booster  
**Rabies** vaccine  
**FIP**—Feline Infectious Peritonitis, esp. for cats that go out/may escape
- 19 wks: **FIP** booster

\*\*\*All vaccinations are boosted one year later.

### Parasites

Many kittens arrive with intestinal parasites. The feces may look normal, so it is important to look under the microscope. Please bring in a fresh fecal (stool) specimen so that we may check your kitten. The specimen is good for 4 hours at room temperature, and 24 hours refrigerated (not frozen). If your cat will go outdoors and hunt mice, you also need to watch for signs of tapeworms. The tapeworm segments are often found on the hair around the anus and look like dried-up rice grains.

### FeLV/FIV Testing

We recommend that all new adoptions be tested for Feline Leukemia Virus and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus. This is a blood test.

### Feeding

Kittens should be fed a high-quality kitten food, made by Science Diet, Eukanuba(Iams), Royal Canin or ProPlan, usually until they are one year old. These are available at pet shops and feed stores. Thorough research has proven that these diets are highly nutritious. Be cautious about “new” premium diets from lesser known companies, that may not be properly researched or balanced. There is little “policing” of pet food manufacturers claims. Do not feed bargain brands. The poor quality ingredients result in poor quality nutrition.

While dry food is convenient, the latest information indicates that canned food is a better diet for cats, and is *not* worse for their teeth, as once thought. It is important to expose your young cat to a variety of cat foods--canned, dry, different flavors, and different shapes/textures, so your cat does not become fixated on eating only one type of food as an adult.

Feed your kitten 4 meals per day until 3 months old, then 3 meals per day until 4 months old, then 2 meals per day. Each cat should have their own bowl.

## Obesity Prevention

Obesity is becoming epidemic, especially in house cats. Prevention begins in the first year. Too much food is one component. First, all cats should have their own bowl, so amount consumed can be monitored, and regulated. Feeding meals (as opposed to “free feeding”) is recommended. Growing kittens require twice as much food (per pound) than adult cats. Here are some feeding guidelines:

Growing kittens—1.5 oz of canned or 1.5 Tbsp of dry food per pound per day.

Divide this amount into several meals

Grown cats—0.75 oz of canned or 0.75 Tbsp of dry/pound of bodyweight/per day.

(about 1-6oz can or 6 Tbsp dry/day for the average 8-9# cat)

Divide this amount into two meals.

\*\*Note: kitten growth tapers off at 6 months of age, about the time of the spay/neuter. This is when you should start decreasing the amount fed.

Specific feeding guidelines for your cat \_\_\_\_\_

Not enough exercise is another component of the obesity epidemic. If you have more than one young cat, they will naturally play/exercise together. If not, we encourage owners to engage their cat in play sessions, at least 20 min. twice a day. See the Indoor Cat Initiative <http://www.vet.ohio-state.edu/747.htm> for some great ideas on play. This site also has a lot of good information on how to enrich your home for your cat.

## Litterbox

Proper litterbox care is vital to keeping your cat happy about using it. For the youngest kittens, it is best to keep them to one room so they don't have too far to travel, gradually expanding the area they have access to. Ultimately, you need to have one litterbox per level of house, or one more litterbox than the number of cats you have, and they need to be cleaned frequently—preferably daily. Some cats are very particular about the cleanliness of the litterbox, and if it doesn't meet their standard, they may be tempted to go elsewhere. Should *this* habit start, it can be difficult to stop, so prevention is the key!!!

## Spaying and Neutering

We recommend spaying female cats and neutering male cats at 6 months of age, sooner if they start acting like adolescents!! This will prevent many health and behavior problems.

**Declawing** can be done anytime after 3 months of age, though most people choose to combine it with the spay or neuter surgery.

## Microchipping

We can now permanently identify your cat by using a needle to insert a small microchip under the skin. Enrolled cats have their chip number in a national registry. The humane society scans all stray cats for microchips and are able to return “chipped” cats to their owners. You might want to have your cat microchipped when he or she is anesthetized for the spay or neuter.

Microchips are especially helpful in cats as most collars are dangerous for cats. Should you want to use a collar on your cat, make sure it is elastic or “quick release” so that it can slip off should it get caught on something, or it could injure your cat.