

## **Suggestions for Kittens**

1. We strongly suggest that you have your kitten tested for feline leukemia (Feleuk) and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV), especially if your cat comes from a multi-cat household, a pet store, a farm, a stray, or an unknown situation. Feline leukemia is the number one disease killer of cats today. The FIV virus affects cats in much the same way as the AIDS virus affects people. Cats will often carry the disease for several months or years before they develop any signs of the disease. Testing for these viral diseases is the only way to know if your kitten may have this disease. If your kitten goes outside, or you plan for it to go outside, then it also needs to be vaccinated for feline leukemia.
2. Kittens can be declawed any time after 9 to 10 weeks of age or two pounds of weight. Kittens declawed at this time will have less pain and soreness than cats declawed over one year of age. Therefore, we encourage owners to have kittens declawed at an early age. Before having your kitten declawed, it is good to wait one or two weeks after you acquire your kitten, so that they can adjust to their new home. We will provide you with an estimate for declawing your kitten.
3. Male and female kittens can be neutered or spayed around 4 to 6 months of age. Spaying makes female cats better pets for several reasons. Spaying prevents them from going into heat or acquiring uterine infections. Also, it prevents them from having unwanted litters of kittens. Neutering a male cat prevents them from wandering the neighborhood, decreases the potential for them to urinate inappropriately in the house and fight with other cats in the neighborhood, which can be deadly and costly. We can provide you with an estimate for declawing your kitten.
4. Feed a high quality, high protein kitten food. Feed at least twice a day. We recommend premium foods such as Iams and Science Diets. You should also have plenty of fresh water available for your kitten. Adult cats can be fed once a day. If you decide to change foods, do it gradually over a week, phasing in the new food, while gradually phasing out the old food.
5. Fleas are common pests and can occur at anytime in any season of the year. We carry numerous flea products such as Revolution, Frontline Spray, Frontline Plus, and shampoos. We also carry household flea control products to kill fleas and ticks that can jump off your kitten and colonize the carpet in your house. Be careful, because cats are very sensitive to insecticides. We encourage the use of Revolution as a flea preventative on your pet because it also protects against feline heartworm disease, which is becoming more of a problem in kittens and is also very hard to diagnose.
6. Do not give pain medication such as aspirin or Tylenol to your kitten without consulting our veterinary staff first. Cats do not have the enzyme capacity to break down these drugs, and the results can be lethal. If your kitten is experiencing pain, this may be a sign of an underlying problem that may your veterinarian need address.
7. Tapeworms come from eating fleas and rodents. The cyst stage lives in the flea or rodent. The cyst then matures in your cat once it has been eaten. Your cat may pass small white segments in the stools that look similar to "rice". Please let us know if you see any of these segments. We often cannot find them in fecal examinations because they are passed intermittently. They can be easily treated with tapeworm medication.
8. It is strongly recommended to test for worms to determine if your kitten has intestinal parasites. We will your test your kitten to be sure that he or she is parasite free. Many of these intestinal parasites can also infect people. You should bring in a stool sample every time your kitten comes in for a vaccination so that we can check it for worms.
9. Vaccinations are important for your kitten. All kittens should be vaccinated for Distemper, Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, Chylamadia and Rabies. If you plan on allowing your pet to go outside, then he should also be vaccinated for feline leukemia and feline immunodeficiency virus. A series of vaccinations is required to build the immunity your kitten needs to prevent diseases. Kittens are not immune from these diseases until two weeks after the last vaccination is given in the kitten series (about 14 to 15 weeks). Therefore, it is important that your kitten's

association with other cats be limited until two or three weeks after the last vaccination is given (about 14 to 15 weeks of age). If your kitten is exposed to one of these diseases, it can take up to two weeks for your kitten to show signs of illness. It is important to vaccinate for Rabies, because if your kitten is not vaccinated and bites someone, it will have to be impounded for at least 10 days. Also, in order to get your kitten licensed through animal control, it needs to be vaccinated first.

10. It is not uncommon for young kittens from multi-cat sources to sneeze. This may be due to chilling, stress, or to an upper respiratory disease that may have infected your kitten before you acquired it. If this is the case, isolate your new kitten from other animals you may have, as many upper respiratory conditions are very contagious to other pets.

11. Your kitten was checked for ear mites today. They are microscopic tick-like parasites that live in the ears of cats and kittens. We will recheck your kitten in subsequent visits to make sure that we have not missed any mites.

12. Make sure to spend about 20 minutes to one hour a day holding and petting you new kitten. The first two to 15 weeks of age are the imprinting stage where kittens learn to form associations with their new owner(s), and learn to be more affectionate. When handling your new kitten, make sure and hold their feet, open their mouth, trim their nails and look in their ears. This gets them familiar with being handled by people, and enables us to perform a better exam.

13. We need to know the vaccination and worming history of your kitten so that we can develop a worming and vaccination program for your kitten. Also we need to know where it came from (breeder, farm, humane society etc.) so that we can evaluate the risk to any disease exposure.

14. We encourage owners to have their pet microchipped. This is not a tracking device, but another form of pet ID. If your pet becomes lost and is picked up by animal control, they will be able to identify it by the microchip imbedded under the skin. Microchipping can be done at any time and does not require an anesthetic to do. It can be conveniently done when your kitten is spayed or neutered. We use AVID and Home Again microchips.

15. We recommend that you keep the address and phone number of the veterinary emergency clinic handy. This is a full service emergency veterinary clinic developed especially to handle after hours emergencies. It is the only veterinary hospital in Lincoln equipped to do so. It is located at 3700 South 9<sup>th</sup> Street, north of the State Penitentiary and is open all nights, weekends, and holidays.

16. Veterinary Pet Insurance has several good insurance plans. They are available on the web at [www.petinsurance.com](http://www.petinsurance.com)

17. Our hospital is a full service hospital; the American Animal Hospital Association certifies us. Only 10% of the veterinary hospitals nationwide and only three hospitals in Lincoln are certified by AAHA. We provide all veterinary services (surgery, medicine, dentistry, and diagnostics) full service grooming and boarding.

18. Make sure you have a litter box that is in an out of the way quiet place for your kitten to use. Clean it at least twice a week. Kittens usually prefer unscented litter material that is of small grit size. It is best to have two litter boxes stationed in strategic areas of the house for your kitten to use. In multi cat households the formula for the number of litter boxes to have is the number of cats plus one equals the number of litter boxes that you need to prevent inappropriate urination outside of the box. Also make sure that the size of the litter box is adequate for your kitten to get into. Common reasons that kittens do not use the litter are: it is dirty, they do not like the location of it, it is not big enough, another cat is using the litter box, or they do not like the type of litter.

19. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Kitten proof your house. Many houseplants are toxic to kittens and other pets. Take measures to make all houseplants inaccessible to your kitten. Also, it is important to make sure they cannot get into other things that could harm them like paints, sprays, mouse bait etc; or things that they could damage like knocking china off of shelves, or catching fish out of an aquarium.

20. If you have any other questions regarding the raising of you puppy, please don't hesitate to call our office at 435-4947. We will be very happy to assist you.