



Recommended Veterinary Care for your Cat

We welcome you and your cat to Duxbury Animal Hospital. Below, we have listed our recommendations for veterinary care to give your cat a long, healthy life. The majority are based on national recommendations from various veterinary organizations as well as local specialists who are aware of our regional needs.

Physical examination and vaccinations

Every year, a cat ages the equivalent of 3-10 human years depending on age and breed. Therefore, your pet should receive a full physical examination every year until 7 years of age. At 7, the aging process accelerates and physical examinations should be performed every 6 months or more. The following schedule reflects Duxbury Animal Hospital's current recommendations:

For Kittens:

8-10 weeks old	Exam #1, vaccinations, fecal testing, de-worming, FeLV/FIV/HW test
12-14 weeks old	Exam #2, vaccinations, fecal testing, de-worming
16-18 weeks old	Exam #3, vaccinations

Required vaccinations:

- **Distemper combo (FVRCP):** Given at each visit. This vaccine covers Feline Panleukopenia Virus, Calici Virus, and Viral Rhinotracheitis. Panleukopenia is also known as "cat distemper" which is a highly contagious and often fatal disease in young cats and is easily transmitted. This vaccine also immunizes against several upper respiratory viruses that are all highly contagious and are widespread. High death rates occur in young and old cats. Upper respiratory infections are easily spread. Even a stray cat that seems outwardly to be healthy may be a "carrier" infecting your pet, even through a screen window or through you yourself. Kittens receive this vaccine every 3 weeks until they are 16-20 weeks of age. Beginning at the first adult visit (typically around 16 months of age), the vaccine is then given every three years.

- **Rabies** vaccination: Given after your cat is at least 12 weeks of age and repeated yearly after that. Rabies is a FATAL INFECTION of the nervous system that attacks ALL WARM-BLOODED ANIMALS, INCLUDING HUMANS. Rabies has become synonymous with the image of a vicious dog

or wild animal, but cats have outnumbered dogs in reported cases since 1981.

Rabies is a public health hazard and a personal risk to all pet owners. Therefore, vaccination is required by State law and carries stiff penalties when you fail to keep your cat up to date. Rabies can be transmitted through the bite of an infected animal. Even cats kept indoors can come into contact with a rabies carrier in a basement, garage, or attic. Because there is no cure for rabies, vaccination is your cat's only protection. While rabies vaccines labeled for 3-year use are available, they are not recommended in cats. Therefore, rabies vaccination is done annually.

Non-core Vaccines:

- Feline Leukemia: This vaccine is reserved for cats that go outdoors because the virus requires "nose to nose" contact for transmission. As the name implies, the virus causes serious and fatal leukemia (cancer of the white blood cells). While the older forms of the leukemia vaccine have been implicated in causing other forms of cancer then, the new vaccines have proven safe thus far. Your cat should be screened and found negative for feline leukemia prior to receiving the vaccine. There are two initial vaccines given 3 weeks apart. It is then given annually.

Laboratory testing

- FeLV/FIV/HW test is run to screen cats for Feline Leukemia Virus, Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (feline AIDS) and heartworm disease. Kittens can get these diseases from their mother or from other cats they may have come in contact with. The viruses are contagious to other cats, so it is especially important to know your new kitten's status if you have other cats in your home.

- Fecal testing screens for the presence of intestinal parasites. People are often unaware of how commonly kittens are carriers of worms and other diseases. Kittens frequently acquire intestinal parasites from their mother. Intestinal parasites can be spread to people, so fecal screening for parasites is very important for the well being for the human members of your family. Feline roundworm is actually the #2 cause of blindness in young children. For more information on parasites and people, please visit the Companion Animal Parasite Control website, www.petsandparasites.org.

Please bring a fresh stool sample (no more than 4 hours old) for testing at the first 2 appointments. Please make sure samples are moist - not dry or hard - and a little litter is ok. Collection containers can be provided for your convenience.

- Blood screens including a complete blood count and blood chemistry panel are run at 5 months of age and are required before anesthesia for the spay or neuter. This allows us to assess the function of your cat's vital organs and ensure that there are no signs of any blood-borne parasites or diseases. It is then run annually until they are 7-8 years of age. At that time, a more thorough blood chemistry panel is run in addition to a blood thyroid screen.

Parasite Prevention

- Internal parasites include both intestinal (worms, protozoa, etc.) and blood-borne (heartworm) organisms. As mentioned above, intestinal parasites in cats can have serious effects on humans, especially children. While many people feel indoor-only cats are immune to these problems, it has been proven that these cats easily catch parasites from household insects (crickets, beetles, cockroaches) and plant potting soils.

Many people don't realize that cats can catch heartworm, but the reality is that it can cause a more serious and long-lasting disease in feline patients than in dogs. And, believe it or not, indoor cats seem to have a higher rate of infection, possibly due to starving mosquitoes more aggressively feeding when trapped in a house. Revolution, a topical preventive, is very effective at preventing both intestinal worms and heartworm when used monthly throughout the year.

- External Parasites Include fleas, ticks, and mites. Even indoor cats are able to become infested with these parasites when they enter the home on humans or on their own. Monthly use of a topical preventive, like Revolution, will prevent these diseases.

Surgery

Please see the enclosed handout on Duxbury Animal Hospital's important policies regarding surgeries performed at our clinic. Below are some facts about possible upcoming elective procedures.

- Spay/Neuter : Duxbury Animal Hospital recommends that the spay/neuter be performed at about 5-6 months of age. It is at this age that kittens are old enough to handle anesthesia, but young enough that they have not begun showing any behavioral problems like urine spraying or aggression. It is also recommended to reduce health problems such as cancer and serious infections.

- Declawing - The most important point about declawing is that it is NOT the simple and benign procedure that many people believe it to be. Declawing literally involves removing the last bone of the paws on the five front digits. It is the equivalent of cutting-off a person's fingertips below the last knuckle. While this service is provided by our clinic, we encourage people to try to get their cats used to nail trims before considering this surgery. Trim your kitten's nails as often as needed to keep nails short and blunt (about every 2-4 weeks). You can use regular human nail clippers and our staff would be happy to show you how easy it can be to find where to cut them. The more regularly they are cut, the less likely they will develop the habit of scratching your furniture. In order to train your kitten about appropriate scratching, provide several different scratching devices. Make sure there are both vertical and horizontal surfaces for scratching, enough length for your kitten to stretch out, and a variety of surface textures for your kitten to scratch on (like carpet, wood, sisal, cardboard).

If you do decide to have your cat declawed, Duxbury Animal Hospital will utilize our surgical laser for the procedure to allow for the smallest wound possible while decreasing the risk of swelling, bleeding, and pain.

Microchipping

A microchip is a small implant (about the size of a grain of rice) that can be inserted under your pet's skin to permanently identify your pet. If your kitten is lost, you have peace of mind knowing that your kitten can be traced back to you even without ID tags. A microchip can be placed at the time of the spay/neuter, or sooner if you would like. We recommend this for all pets.

Litter box training

Please see attached handout.

Dental care

Dental disease is a major cause of illness in cats. While daily brushing is the only effective preventive measure for dental disease, we realize and understand that this is difficult for most cat owners. Use of dental treats, such as the Hill's t/d, is recommended on a daily basis. Even with this preventive care, most cats will require dental care procedure every few years to every 6-9 months. Your veterinarian will assess this during the physical exam.

Insurance

Many clients have asked if pet insurance is available. The cost of pet ownership over the lifetime of the pet was determined in a 2006 survey by American Pet Product Manufacturers Association. For an average healthy pet, the yearly cost is \$919 or over a 10 year life span, the healthy pet can cost up to \$9,190, this includes vet care, food, pet lodging, toys and treats! Pet Insurance can help budget the veterinary costs of pet ownership, especially when it comes to unexpected illness or trauma.

There are general two types of pet insurance:

- ◆Comprehensive: Like human health insurance, it will cover part of your wellness visits, vaccines, and dental care. However, premiums are much higher, payout is lower, and there tends to be many more restrictions.
- ◆Sick/Injured: While this does not cover wellness care, it tends to be less expensive and will cover up to 90% of your bills for injuries or sickness. There are virtually no limitations on coverage.

Comprehensive companies:

- Veterinary Pet Insurance www.petinsurance.com, 1-866-VET-PETS
- Petplan Pet Insurance www.gopetplan.com, 1-866-GO-Petplan
- Pets Best www.petsbest.com, 1-877-738-7237
- ASPCA www.aspcapetinsurance.com/info, 1-866-861-9092

Sick/Injured:

- Trupanion www.trupanion.com 1-800-569-7913

Emergency care

During regular hours, we will handle any emergencies within our clinic's capabilities.

After hours emergencies are handled at:

- VCA South Shore Animal Hospital in Weymouth, MA 781-337-6622
- Cape Cod Veterinary Specialists in Buzzards Bay, MA 508-759-5125

Helpful websites

www.cfa.org – gives advice about behavioral issues, breeds, and other areas of responsible cat ownership

www.hillspet.com – offers advice on proper pet nutrition, all stage life care, and cat diseases.

www.catster.com – a resource for breed information, healthcare Q & A as well as Cat Blogs! You can even create a personal webpage for your cat!

www.petsforlife.org – sponsored by The Humane Society of the United States, offers a wide variety of articles on training and behavior.

