



We would like to welcome you and your kitten to the Practice – thank you for choosing Grove Lodge!

We look forward to a lifetime relationship during which we can work together to provide the very best healthcare and advice for you and your pet.



This is a summary of key topics, which you might have already discussed with the nurse and/or vet and will be a useful reference tool during your pet's life.

First impressions last!

Your kitten's first trip to the vet needs to be as stress free as possible, so it's very important to ensure your kitten is in a secure basket, perhaps with a small blanket over it to help them feel safe. Not all kittens will accept treats whilst at the surgery but it is worth bringing along a couple of really yummy treats to help them associate the vets with pleasant things.

Feeding your kitten

A good diet is the foundation for a long and healthy life, but care must be taken not to overfeed as this can lead to obesity and related health issues. Each animal is an individual and the Practice Nurse will be able to discuss your kitten's specific dietary requirements. At Grove Lodge you can buy top quality complete dry and wet foods, designed by Hills, to cover all your pet's life stages and medical needs. We do have other brands available for sale by ordering from your branch. The Practice Nurse can also offer advice on these if you need it.



Your kitten will need treating for fleas and worms regularly throughout their life.

Our motto is: prevention is better than cure!

Worms and fleas



We normally assume that all kittens are carrying roundworms, which are passed to them through their mother's milk. We initially treat kittens for roundworms and subsequently they will need a multi-wormer that covers all round and tapeworms. The breeder may have wormed your kitten; check which wormer they used and when they used it. The Practice Nurse will need to know this information to ensure the worming is as effective as possible.



All kittens must be wormed (veterinary products are the most effective) every 5, 8, 10 and 12 weeks of age, thereafter the Practice Nurse or vet will provide you with the best advice regarding which product is most suitable. As doses are based on weights, your pet will need to be weighed by the Practice Nurse (free of charge) or you can weigh them at home. Weighing is necessary until they reach a stable adult weight, ie approximately 1 year of age.

For routine prevention of fleas, we strongly recommend treating your pet all year round using a veterinary product, as these are **scientifically proven** to be more effective than over the counter products.



We are now recommending a spot on product called **Advocate, which treats both fleas and most worms** in one application – please ask us for more information. Your kitten will still need to be treated for tapeworm once or twice a year, as Advocate does not cover that specific worm, kittens more frequently.

It is important to remember that fleas don't holiday in winter! In fact, we see many outbreaks at the time people switch on the central heating. With the female flea laying up to 200 eggs a day and flea pupae lying dormant for up to 2 years, an infestation can take several months to resolve. In the case of infestation, or if your pet has a particular sensitivity to flea bites, we would advise the use of Indorex household spray (*not to be used on your pets*), available from your vets. It will kill adult fleas and their larva for the first 2 months, and continue to kill the larva for a further 10 months. This means the product needs only to be used once a year, the best time being either when you put your heating on, or when the weather starts to warm up. This spray must be used in conjunction with a veterinary prescribed flea product for your pet. Read the instructions before use. You can repeat the Indorex spray every 2 months if necessary.

Vaccination



The initial course comprises of two injections, 3-4 weeks apart. Thereafter, your pet will require a yearly booster on or around the date the second vaccination was given. The earlier you start the better, as it will allow your pet to go out and become well socialised and adjusted. The first vaccination is usually done at around 9 weeks, followed by the second 3 to 4 weeks later. Your pet can then explore the wider world on their own four feet two weeks after the second vaccination.

Microchipping

We strongly recommend all cats are microchipped. This can be done at any time with the vet or Practice Nurse. As the needle is a little larger than the normal vaccination needle we would sometimes wait until the kitten is slightly older and a reasonable size. Some people prefer to have this procedure done when their pet is neutered and under anaesthetic.

Having your pet microchipped avoids unnecessary heartache should your pet be lost, or should a dispute over ownership ever arise. If you would like to travel abroad under the pet passport scheme, a microchip is a legal requirement.





Neutering

If you are not intending to breed from your cat, they will lead a healthier and happier life if neutered.

We recommend spaying females and neutering males from 5–6 months of age.



Male Cats who have not been neutered may develop testicular cancer. There is also an increased likelihood they will develop behavioural issues such as roaming, excessive urine marking/spraying and possibly a greater tendency towards aggression/fighting. They also make a very loud howling noise when calling for a queen, which worsens if there is a calling queen within 2 miles!

Also, if/when a male cat roams he can go for miles looking for a mate which can lead to him getting lost or, worse, involved in a road traffic accident. If your entire male finds a mate, this could result in unwanted kittens and, unless he is vaccinated against it, will put him at risk from feline leukemia (FELV).

Female cats who have not been spayed are at risk from uterine infections (pyometra). Risk of mammary cancer is increased if your cat is not spayed and may require extensive and expensive surgery to resolve. If left entire, females can 'call' every 2 weeks during the breeding season for the period of a week. Calling is characterised by howling noises, being overly affectionate, rolling around, paddling of the back legs and putting the tail to one side when stroked. Female cats can also spray as a way of trying to attract males, although this is less common than in the males.

You may also find that the neighbourhood tom cat will be hanging around outside and potentially spraying around the outside of your house – very smelly!

For both male and female cats, it is important to remember that they may be more prone to weight gain after neutering so it is important to monitor your pet's weight carefully. Your Practice Nurse can check your cat's weight as often as you like for free. Hills Neutered Cat is specifically designed to help control your cat's weight and can be used from the age of six months after they are neutered. Before that, make sure you are feeding the right amount of kitten food and not giving too many treats.

Dental hygiene

Without preventative treatment, most animals will develop significant plaque, tartar and/or gingivitis, quite often from as early as 2 to 3 years of age. These dental problems can affect more than just the gums and teeth. High levels of bacteria in the mouth will have a detrimental affect on other parts of the body. This can be very significant in the elderly or where the problem is severe.

Dental treatment involves an anaesthetic and a scale and polish and extractions if necessary, which can be costly. It is also worth bearing in mind that insurance companies will not cover routine dental treatment.



Preventative treatment is far more **cost effective** and can be achieved in different ways. The easiest option is to feed an oral care food that helps to prevent the build up of plaque and tartar.



There is also an enzymatic gel available called 'Logic' which contains anti-bacterial agents and is poultry flavoured so is very easy to rub onto your cat's gums or paws. For difficult cats it can be put in their food or on their paws.

There are also dental treats available in most pet shops, which can help but it is important to watch the amount of these you feed as they can lead to weight gain.

For further advice on dental care, please speak to a Practice Nurse, or the reception team.

Socialisation and habituation

The importance of positive socialisation cannot be over stated, as this is the foundation for the rest of your kitten's life. It is therefore vital that your kitten has happy experiences from the very first day they join family.

Socialisation is different from habituation. Socialisation is used to describe the process of learning to interact with others including for example people, other dogs, other cats etc. **Habituation** is used to describe the process of learning to accept normal sights and sounds they could encounter in every day life – non-living things. Generally speaking, experiences in the first 16 weeks, both good and bad, leave a lasting impression on your kitten. This does not however mean that experiences after this time are less important.



To help with habituation, we recommend introducing your kitten to day to day noises such as traffic, washing machines, hoovers, children's play etc. It is vital that initially this is done in a slow, positive manner. Start with quieter times or from a distance and only once your kitten is happy and relaxed, move closer.

A Sounds Sociable CD is a fantastic tool to use at home and is available from us. It covers a wide variety of different every day noises that your kitten might encounter and find alarming. Listening to the CD in their home will help avoid your kitten becoming distressed and developing phobias in later life. The CD comes with full instructions for use. It is important though that you **do NOT play the traffic noise section** – for obvious reasons we do not want cats to become unafraid of traffic.

Teaching appropriate play

Another vital thing we need to help our kitten to know is how to play appropriately. Their littermates and mother will teach this naturally by telling them when they have played/bitten too hard and we must continue this work. **It is important to keep in mind that it is normal for kittens to explore their environment with their mouths and feet.**

When they grab at your hands/feet etc, this is normally to get your attention and to practice their hunting skills! Many people allow the kitten to wrestle with their hands etc as the kitten is relatively small and harmless, however it is important to remember that everything they learn as kittens they will continue to do through to adulthood. It is worth bearing in mind that the majority of adult cats weigh over 4kg, therefore inappropriate play can pose a potential problem in the future! Therefore, from the moment you get your kitten, you must make it clear that this is not acceptable behaviour.



When they pounce and grab any part of you, offer them one of their own toys and play with them with that. If they continue with the inappropriate play then walk away. Your kitten will soon learn that this behaviour ends the game.

Remember: you are trying to teach your kitten what they can do rather than just telling them what they can't.

If you are really suffering, to avoid over reacting to pounces and bites – thus making things more exciting for the kitten (!) – why not try some padding, gloves or thick walking socks? This will avoid you squealing or making sudden movements – both very exciting for a kitten! – and will enable you to keep calm while giving them a toy of their own.

House training

The majority of kittens will go to their new home litter trained. Cats are very clean animals and will always use a litter tray if possible.

Once you bring your kitten home they may not learn straight away where the litter tray is so you must ensure you keep placing them into the tray every couple of hours so they learn.

The litter tray that you supply for your cat must be clean and spacious and located in a quiet, private area. Once your cat is fully vaccinated and neutered you can start to think about letting them outside (providing you do not live near a busy road), in which case you can get rid of the litter tray. Some cats are more timid than others and if the neighbours' cats are a bit intimidating it might be worth continuing with a litter tray. This is to prevent them toileting inside if they feel vulnerable toileting outside.

Remember every cat needs their own litter tray so if you have more than one cat, you need the same number of litter trays as cats plus one extra. The spare one is to prevent cats starting to toilet indoors inappropriately which they may do if they have used theirs and you have not been home to clean. Some cats are fastidiously clean and if they have used their tray once they will not use it again. Other cats are less fussy but it is much easier to prevent house soiling than try to change it once it has occurred.

It might seem like a lot of work, but your kitten will give you endless fun and pleasure.

If you follow this advice and be kind and consistent to your kitten, you will be rewarded with a loving, well-balanced and happy cat.

Most importantly – enjoy your kitten!

