



New Kitten Information Guide

Core Vaccines (Essential Protection)

Core vaccines protect against diseases that are common in our area and, in some cases, can be transmitted to humans. For more information on these diseases, please visit: [Feline Infectious Diseases Information](#)

For more information on these vaccines, please visit: [Feline Vaccine Information](#)

Vaccine Considerations

Vaccines administered by owners (such as those purchased from feed stores) can be recorded in the medical record; however, they are not recommended due to uncertainty in storage, handling, and administration, which may affect efficacy. Vaccines administered by a licensed veterinarian often include manufacturer-backed support, which may assist with treatment costs if a vaccinated pet contracts the disease it was intended to prevent.

FVRCP (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, Panleukopenia)

This vaccine series begins at 8 weeks of age and is repeated every 3–4 weeks until the kitten is at least 16 weeks old. Panleukopenia is one of the most serious diseases we vaccinate against. It can cause severe lethargy, low white blood cell counts, vomiting, diarrhea, and can be fatal, especially in young kittens. Unfortunately, Panleukopenia is endemic to our area, meaning unvaccinated kittens are at high risk of exposure.

Kittens are not considered fully protected until two weeks after their final vaccine. Until then, they should avoid exposure to cats with an unknown vaccination history. After the initial series, the vaccine is boosted at 1 year and then every 3 years.

Rabies

Rabies vaccination is required by law. In Nevada, it can be given as early as 12 weeks of age, and we typically recommend administering it at the same time as the final FVRCP vaccine. Rabies is a fatal disease that can be transmitted to humans, and there is no treatment once infection occurs.

The vaccine we administer is valid for 1 year and requires annual boosters thereafter. Our doctors have chosen to use the PureVax vaccine line, which has been associated with a lower risk of vaccine-related cancers in cats later in life.

Lifestyle Vaccines (Based on Risk and Exposure)

These vaccines are recommended depending on your cat's environment and activities.

FeLV (Feline Leukemia Virus)

This vaccine series begins at 12 weeks of age and is boosted 3–4 weeks later, typically around 16 weeks of age. Cats older than 16 weeks receiving the vaccine for the first time will also require two doses given 3–4 weeks apart. After the initial series, the vaccine is boosted annually.

After the second annual booster, continued annual vaccination is recommended for cats that:

- Go outdoors
- Have contact with outdoor cats
- Live in households with four or more cats

Feline Leukemia is a contagious viral disease that can weaken the immune system and lead to serious illness over time. It is medically recommended that cats be tested for FIV/FeLV prior to vaccination. Important information regarding testing:

- If a kitten under 6 months of age tests positive, the test should be repeated once the kitten is over 6 months old
- A confirmatory laboratory test may also be submitted to our reference laboratory if needed

Basic Kitten Care

Deworming and Intestinal Parasite Screening

We recommend routine deworming for roundworms and hookworms, which are common in our area. If not already completed, a broad-spectrum dewormer will be given at the first visit. Owners should monitor for visible worms in the stool. If present, treatment should be repeated 14 days after the initial dose. Some intestinal parasites can be transmitted to humans, particularly children and immunocompromised individuals.

Annual fecal testing is recommended to screen for parasites that may not be visible to the naked eye. Testing is also advised if your pet shows symptoms such as weight loss, poor growth, diarrhea, or loose stool. Samples should be:

- Approximately the size of a large grape and less than 24 hours old
- Refrigerated until submission

Gloves should be used during collection, followed by thorough handwashing. Fecal collection containers are available upon request at no cost. For more information on parasites, please visit: [Roundworms & Hookworms Information](#)

Heartworm Prevention

Heartworms are different from intestinal worms and are transmitted by infected mosquitoes. Cats are considered an atypical host for heartworms, meaning the worms rarely reach adulthood. However, even immature heartworms can cause severe inflammation and damage to the lungs and airways, known as Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease (HARD). In some cases, heartworm infection can result in sudden death.

Historically, our area has been considered lower risk for heartworm disease, but the incidence has increased due to the movement of infected dogs into the region. Mosquitoes are active in our area for approximately 10 months out of the year, increasing the risk of exposure, especially for cats that spend time outdoors. Unlike dogs, there is no approved treatment for heartworm disease in cats, making prevention extremely important.

We offer NexGard Combo, a monthly topical medication that helps prevent heartworm disease. This product also provides protection against roundworms, hookworms, fleas, and ticks, helping protect both your pet and your family from certain zoonotic parasites. For more information on flea and tick prevention, please visit: [Nexgard Combo Information](#)

Flea and Tick Prevention

Fleas are not highly prevalent in our immediate area but can be introduced through travel or contact with affected animals. Ticks are also present locally.

Preventative options include monthly topical medications such as Frontline or NexGard Combo. Prevention is especially recommended for cats traveling to areas with higher flea or tick prevalence or spending time outdoors.

Pet Insurance

Pet insurance can be a valuable tool in helping manage the cost of unexpected veterinary care, such as accidents or illnesses. While not required, many pet owners find it provides peace of mind and allows for more flexibility when making medical decisions. Plans and coverage can vary widely, so we recommend researching different providers and selecting a policy that best fits your needs and budget. Compare Policy options on:

<https://www.pawlicy.com/>

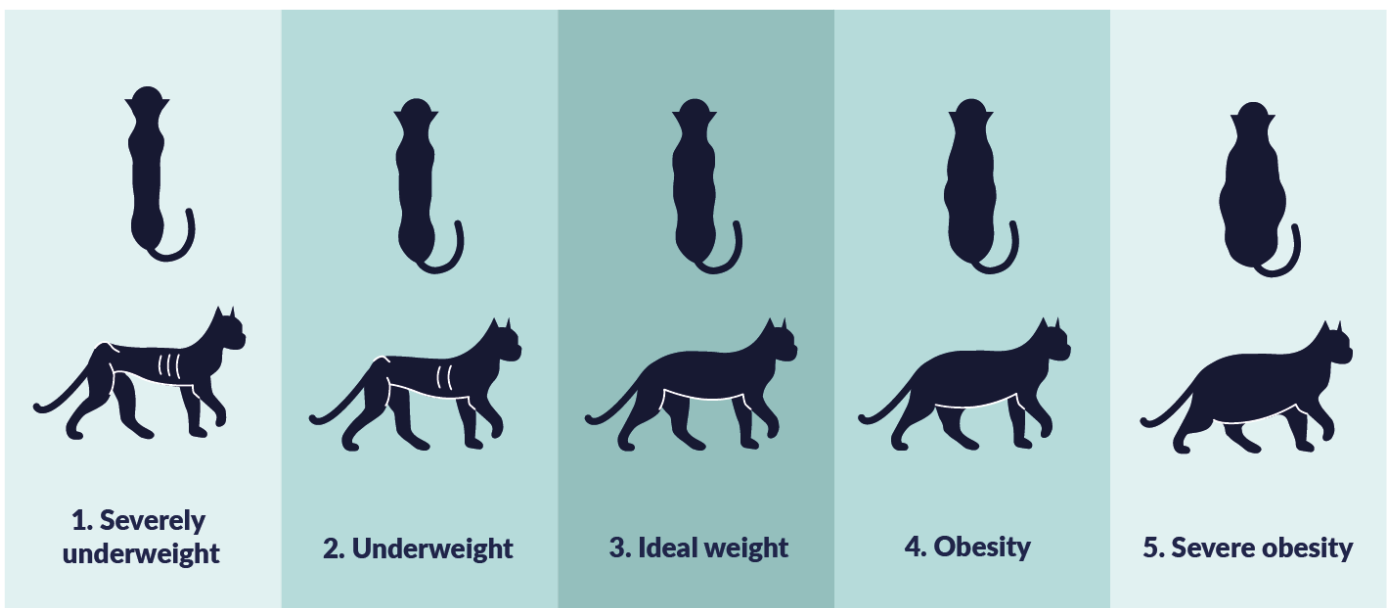
Nutrition

Your kitten should be fed a diet appropriate for their age and lifestyle. Cats should always be fed a diet specifically formulated for felines. We recommend choosing a diet that carries an AAFCO (Association of American Feed Control Officials) statement, which helps ensure the food is complete and nutritionally balanced. We recommend:

- Hill's Science Diet Kitten
- Purina ProPlan Kitten

Helpful guidelines:

- Feed kitten food until approximately 12 months of age (may vary depending on breed and lifestyle)
- Avoid using human food as a primary diet
- Keep your kitten lean, as slender cats tend to live longer and experience fewer weight-related diseases
- Monitor your cat's daily food intake and body condition so adjustments can be made as needed



Microchipping

We strongly recommend microchipping all pets as a permanent form of identification. This can be done as early as 8 weeks of age, and many owners choose to have it placed at the time of spay or neuter for added comfort.

A microchip is not a GPS tracker and cannot track your pet's location. Instead, it contains a unique identification number. If your pet is ever lost and brought to a veterinary clinic, animal shelter, or animal control facility, they can be scanned for a microchip. The identification number is then used to contact the microchip company, which provides your contact information so you can be reunited with your pet.

It is extremely important to keep your contact information current with the microchip company, as this is the only way they can reach you if your pet is found.

Dental Care

Starting dental care early helps maintain healthy teeth and gums and can reduce the risk of dental disease later in life. Ideally, your cat's teeth should be brushed daily.

Building Positive Associations

The first step is helping your kitten become comfortable with having their mouth touched. Start by placing something tasty, such as gravy or chicken broth, on your finger and allowing your kitten to lick it off. While doing this, gently touch along the gums and teeth. Over time, your kitten should begin associating this process with positive experiences.

Introducing Texture

Once your kitten is comfortable, place a small piece of gauze around your finger and gently rub the teeth in a circular motion. Continue using praise and rewards throughout the process. As your kitten becomes more comfortable, you can transition to a cat toothbrush, soft child's toothbrush, or finger brush.

Choosing the Right Toothpaste

Only use toothpaste specifically made for pets. Human toothpaste may contain ingredients that are toxic to cats. Pet toothpaste is often available in flavors such as poultry or seafood, which many cats enjoy.

Time to Brush

Begin by brushing only a few teeth at a time, such as the upper canine teeth. Gradually increase the number of teeth brushed as your cat becomes more comfortable. Gentle brushing is sufficient, as the toothpaste itself helps break down plaque.

Don't Forget the Back Teeth

The back molars are the most common location for tartar buildup and gum disease. Gently lifting the lips or brushing from inside the cheek may help access these areas more comfortably. Annual dental examinations are recommended, and professional dental cleanings may be needed as your pet ages.

Nail Care

Scratching is a normal and important behavior for cats. It helps them stretch, maintain healthy nails, and release natural stress-relieving hormones. Providing scratching posts or surfaces with different textures is an important part of your cat's environment. Starting nail care early helps kittens become more comfortable with handling and nail trims later in life.

Touching Your Kitten's Feet

Choose a calm, quiet time to begin handling your kitten's paws. Gently touch and hold the paws for a few seconds at a time while offering treats and praise. Once your kitten becomes comfortable, gently press on the paw pads to expose the nails.

Keep sessions:

- Short
- Calm
- Positive

Introducing Nail Trimmers

Use nail trimmers designed specifically for cats. Allow your kitten to investigate the clippers at their own pace and create positive associations by pairing them with treats.

You can also help desensitize your kitten to the sound of nail clippers by clipping something nearby, such as an uncooked spaghetti noodle.

Clipping the Nails

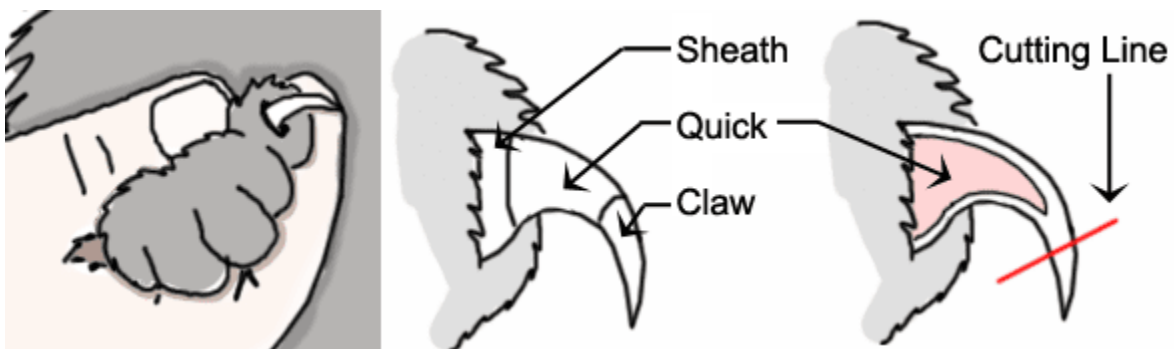
Once your kitten is comfortable, gently press on the paw to expose the nail and trim only the sharp tip. Avoid cutting into the "quick," which contains blood vessels and nerves and can be painful if injured.

It is often best to start slowly:

- Trim only a few nails at a time
- Stop if your kitten becomes stressed
- Reward generously afterward with treats or play

Helpful tips:

- A second person may help hold or distract the kitten
- A towel wrap may help some cats feel more secure
- Never rush the process
- If needed, your veterinary clinic can perform nail trims for you



Spay & Neuter

We generally recommend:

- Spaying females at around 6 months of age
- Neutering males at around 8 months of age

Timing may vary depending on your cat's individual lifestyle and environment. Waiting until this stage allows your cat's body to benefit from natural hormones that support normal growth and development.

Why Spay or Neuter?

These procedures provide both health and behavioral benefits, including:

- Preventing unwanted pregnancies
- Reducing the risk of certain cancers
- Preventing serious uterine infections in females
- Helping reduce hormone-driven behaviors such as urine spraying and territorial aggression

What to Expect During Surgery

Your pet's safety is our top priority. During surgical procedures:

- Advanced monitoring equipment is used to track heart rate, blood pressure, oxygen levels, and temperature
- A trained team member is dedicated to monitoring your cat throughout anesthesia
- A trained recovery assistant closely monitors your cat until they are awake and comfortable

Spay Procedure (Females)

The spay procedure involves a small incision made over the abdomen, through which the ovaries and uterus are removed. Typical healing time is approximately 2 weeks. Benefits include:

- Preventing unwanted pregnancy
- Eliminating the risk of uterine infections
- Reducing the risk of certain cancers

Neuter Procedure (Males)

The neuter procedure involves two small incisions made over the testicles, with one testicle removed through each incision. Typical healing time is approximately 2 weeks. Benefits include:

- Helping reduce urine spraying behaviors
- Reducing territorial aggression
- Decreasing the spread of diseases associated with fighting between cats

Basic Training & Behavior

Cats are highly intelligent and can absolutely be trained. Training provides important mental stimulation, strengthens your bond with your cat, and helps build confidence through positive interactions.

Helpful training tips:

- Most cats are strongly food motivated, so finding a favorite treat can be very helpful
- Short training sessions tend to work best
- Training after a nap is often ideal, as cats may be more focused and interested in rewards
- Focus on teaching one skill at a time before moving on to another
- Continue occasionally practicing learned behaviors so they are not forgotten

Common Training Methods

Clicker Training

Clicker training uses a small clicking sound to communicate to your cat that they performed the correct behavior. The click is immediately paired with a food reward, helping your cat learn which actions earn rewards.

Training clickers can be used, but other gentle clicking sounds, such as a pen click or tongue click, may also work.

Hand Signals

Hand signals pair a visual cue with a desired behavior. For example, an open palm may be used to teach a “high five.”

Verbal Cues

Verbal cues involve pairing a word or phrase with a behavior. Cats can learn many different verbal cues through repetition and consistency.

The exact word used is less important than remaining consistent with it.

Litter Box Training

Choosing the right litter box setup is one of the most important parts of helping your kitten develop good litter box habits.

Litter Box Placement

Cats generally prefer quiet, low-traffic areas for their litter box. Avoid placing litter boxes:

- Near food or water bowls
- In noisy areas
- In locations with frequent activity or interruptions

A good general guideline is:

- One litter box per cat, plus one additional box

The litter box should also be large enough for your cat to comfortably turn around and move within.

Choosing a Litter

Cats can have strong preferences regarding litter texture and scent. Many cats do best with:

- Fine-textured litter
- Unscented litter
- Clumping litter

Some experimentation may be needed to determine your cat’s preference.

Helpful setup tips:

- Use approximately 2 inches of litter
- Scoop daily
- Fully clean and refresh the litter regularly to reduce odor and bacteria buildup

If Accidents Happen

If your cat eliminates outside the litter box:

- Do not scold or punish them
- Punishment may create negative associations with the litter box

Instead:

- Clean accidents thoroughly using an enzymatic cleaner
- Evaluate litter type, box placement, or box style if accidents continue

If your cat suddenly begins avoiding the litter box or has repeated accidents, medical causes should also be considered and evaluated by your veterinarian.

Environmental Enrichment

Environmental enrichment helps cats express natural behaviors such as climbing, scratching, hunting, and exploring. Providing appropriate enrichment can improve both physical and emotional wellbeing. Every cat is different, and some experimentation may be needed to determine which activities your cat enjoys most.

Self-Play Toys

Many cats enjoy toys they can interact with independently. Examples include:

- Paper bags
- Cardboard boxes
- Catnip toys
- Battery-operated toys
- Wall or door-mounted toys

Rotating toys every few weeks can help keep them interesting and engaging.

Always supervise new toys initially to ensure safe play.

Food Puzzles

Food puzzles encourage natural hunting and foraging behaviors. Options may include:

- Commercial puzzle feeders
- Treat-dispensing toys
- Simple homemade enrichment activities

One easy DIY option:

- Place treats or kibble inside cardboard tubes or small boxes with holes cut into them

Scattering portions of your cat's meal throughout the home may also encourage exploration and activity.

Vertical Space

Cats naturally enjoy climbing and observing from elevated locations. Helpful options include:

- Cat trees
- Window perches
- Shelving
- Scratching posts

Providing vertical space can help increase confidence and reduce stress. Bird feeders placed outside a secure window can provide safe visual enrichment and entertainment for indoor cats. Be aware that outdoor cats visible through windows may occasionally trigger stress or territorial behaviors in some cats.

Catios & Outdoor Time

A catio is a secure outdoor enclosure that allows cats to safely experience the outdoors while remaining protected. These spaces may include:

- Climbing structures
- Perches
- Toys
- Scratching surfaces

Inspect outdoor enclosures regularly to ensure they remain secure.

Harness & Leash Training

Some cats can learn to comfortably walk on a harness and leash with patience and gradual introduction.

Helpful tips:

- Allow your cat to first become comfortable wearing the harness indoors
- Ensure the harness fits securely
- Begin in calm, quiet environments before progressing to busier areas

Carrier Training

Carrier training can significantly reduce stress associated with travel and veterinary visits. The goal is to help your cat view the carrier as a safe and familiar space rather than something associated only with stressful events.

Training sessions should remain short, calm, and positive.

Desensitization

Start by placing the carrier in your cat's normal living environment with:

- The door removed or secured open
- Comfortable bedding inside
- Familiar scents such as blankets or clothing

Allow your cat to investigate the carrier at their own pace.

Building Positive Associations

Once your cat becomes comfortable around the carrier:

- Place treats near the entrance
- Gradually move treats farther inside
- Allow your cat to enter voluntarily

High-value treats such as tuna, boiled chicken, or lickable treats may help encourage participation.

Reassembling the Carrier

Once your cat is comfortable entering the carrier, replace the top and door if removed. Continue pairing the carrier with treats and positive experiences.

Closing the Door

When your cat is relaxed eating treats inside the carrier, begin gently closing the door briefly without latching it.

Gradually increase the amount of time the door remains closed while continuing to provide rewards. If your cat becomes distressed:

- Stop the session
- Return to the previous successful step
- Progress more slowly

Moving the Carrier

Once your cat is comfortable remaining inside with the door closed:

- Briefly lift the carrier
- Set it back down
- Reward calm behavior

Gradually progress to walking short distances while carrying the carrier. Supporting the bottom of the carrier during movement may help your cat feel more stable and secure.

Practice Car Rides

Once your cat is comfortable remaining in the carrier for several minutes:

- Begin taking short car rides
- Secure the carrier with a seatbelt
- Place a folded blanket beneath the carrier to reduce vibration

Some cats feel more secure with a lightweight towel or blanket partially covering the carrier, as long as ventilation remains adequate.

Gradually increase ride duration over time.

Even after training is complete, leaving the carrier accessible within the home and practicing occasional rides can help maintain positive associations and reduce future stress.