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### **Cat Vaccine Schedule**

The first 4 months are often the most critical in the life of a cat. Many devastating diseases strike early: therefore preventative medicine is essential. It is strongly recommended to initiate a vaccine program by 8 weeks of age, earlier if the mother is not current on vaccines. Law mandates current rabies vaccinations, whether the animal goes outdoors or not. Females planned for breeding should be current on vaccines BEFORE breeding. Vaccines are not administered to pregnant or debilitated animals. Prince Frederick Animal Hospital follows the vaccine recommendations of the American Animal Hospital Association.

### **Cat Vaccines**

**Dist/RC** One portion of this vaccine is a bone marrow disease, and three portions are respiratory diseases. Give at 8 weeks old or older, then boost in 2-4 weeks, until at least 16 weeks old. Adult cats that have received the kitten series get a booster one year later then every 3 years. Administer over right shoulder.

**FeLV** This disease results in immune suppression. Give at 9 weeks old or older, then boost in 3-4 weeks, until at least 16 weeks old, then yearly. Administer in left rear leg.

**1 year Rabies** This is a 1 year vaccine only for cats that minimizes the risk of cancer formation around the vaccine site. There is also a 3 year rabies available for cats that has a low associated cancer risk. Administer in right rear leg.

**FIP** Recommended if in house with FIP positive cat. Boost in 3-4 weeks then yearly. Nasal vaccine. May be started at 16 weeks of age or older.

**FIV** Recommended if in house with FIV positive cat. Boost THREE times at 3-4 week intervals, then yearly. REQUIRED to microchip cat since cat will test positive for FIV after vaccine. May be started at 9 weeks of age or older. Administer over left shoulder.

**Feline leukemia/FIV/Feline Heartworm Test:** recommended at the initial kitten visit, then every 2 years if cat is to go outdoors.

### **Heartworm Protection**

Heartworms are parasites that are occasionally transmitted to cats by mosquitoes. Monthly prevention is available through your veterinarian. Dosage is according to weight. Heartworms in cats can cause vomiting OR coughing, so if these symptoms are noted your veterinarian may test for feline heartworms. Unfortunately infection can also cause acute death, but at least cats do not contract heartworms as often as dogs. We recommend monthly heartworm preventative for 6 months of the year, from April to September. We also recommend testing cats for heartworms every 2 years.

### **Intestinal Parasites**

Kittens should have feces analyzed for intestinal parasites (roundworms, hookworms, tapeworms, giardia, and coccidia) starting at 8 weeks of age. Up to 90% of kittens have worms! Worms can be acquired before birth, while nursing, from the environment, or from fleas. Two consecutive fecal samples are recommended initially, in order to identify eggs that are shed intermittently. Parasite infestations can cause a wide variety of clinical signs including itchy skin, poor hair coat, stunted growth, pot-bellied appearance, vomiting, bloody or discolored diarrhea, and death. A fecal should also be checked during routine yearly visits. Deworming treatment depends on the parasites identified. In order to prevent re-infestation of the environment, feces should be disposed of.

### **Fleas and Ticks**

Fleas can cause anemia and death in very young animals. Itching, especially of the hind end and pepper-like specks of “dirt” in the hair can indicate flea infestation. Although cats have some natural resistance to tick diseases, you should remove ticks promptly with tweezers, tissue or gloves, and clean the area. Flea and tick preventatives available from your veterinarian are safe, easy and effective in killing both fleas and ticks for dogs and cats 8 weeks of age and older. Topicals are applied to the skin behind the neck once a month. Bathing and humidity does not lower the efficiency of these preventatives as long as cats are dry 2 days prior and 2 days after application. We recommend monthly flea and tick control year-round. Fleas and ticks are active and biting at temperatures over 55 degrees!

### **Surgical Sterilization**

Dog and cat overpopulation is a huge problem in the United States. Breeding of pets is highly discouraged, and should be left for professional breeders. Breeding can be costly, messy, and frustrating. Females should be spayed at 5 1/2 months, and males should be neutered at 6 months. The first heat may occur in females as early as 6 months. The occurrence of serious disease (such as breast cancer and uterine disorders, etc.) are much reduced, especially when sterilized at less than 10 months of age.

### **Weather and Outdoor Pets**

If your cat is allowed outdoors, provide water, food and shelter. If the weather becomes severe or temperatures drop below freezing, bring your cat inside. Water needs to be fresh and checked frequently for freezing. Snow removal substances may be toxic; read labels before use. Remove salt, snow, and ice from paws immediately. If you suspect frostbite, call your veterinarian. Antifreeze is very deadly (1 teaspoon can kill a small dog or any size cat) and has a sweet taste, so clean up spills immediately. During hot weather, dehydration and heat stress can be life threatening. Heat stress causes panting, high fever, rapid heart rate, fatigue, shock and collapse. Heat stress is more likely in older or overweight pets, and pets with heart or lung conditions. Minimize the possibility of heat stress by providing clean water, shade, and adequate ventilation at all times, especially for animal kept outdoors. Avoid overheating, and **NEVER** leave a pet in a parked vehicle. Hot surfaces can irritate or burn your pet's feet. Walk or play on grass or light colored surfaces where the temperatures are cooler.

### **Feeding**

Cats are nibblers and will eat 18-20 times a day. Leave dry food and water out at all times. Canned food is beneficial to the coat and the urinary tract, so offer a small amount of canned food once or twice a day. A kitten may settle down better for the night if canned food is fed at bedtime. Kittens should be fed a good quality kitten food until they are 1 year old. Once a cat is over 1 year old, kitten food can gradually (over 1-2 weeks) be switched to adult food. WE RECOMMEND PURINA PROPLAN DIET!

### **Grooming/Hygiene**

Cats do not usually need bathing, although daily combing helps with shedding and hairball control. If your cat is an indoor cat, the nails can be trimmed once a month or the front nails can be surgically removed after 12 weeks old. Clean ears every 2 weeks. Do not use Q-tips in the ear, only at the opening. Cleaning solutions are available through your veterinarian. You should also clean your cat's teeth 3 times a week. There are toothbrushes and finger covers available to brush the teeth, and cat toothpaste should be used (human toothpaste has too much fluoride).

### **Microchip**

A microchip is a permanent source of identification that is implanted just beneath the skin. Veterinarians, shelters, humane societies and animal control officers all have microchip scanners, so if a microchipped animal is found, it can be traced back to its owner without delay. The fee to insert a microchip here covers *lifelong* PFAH (local) and online (nationwide) activation, and *1-year* premium coverage for insurance/alerts if pet lost. Note that the microchip company will send a bill after one year to continue this yearly premium coverage. If you opt not to continue the yearly premium coverage, your pet will *still be activated lifelong in the microchip database*.

### **Exercise**

Cats that are kept indoors are happier and healthier if they are kept active. Toys are a great way to encourage activity. Ping pong balls, small balls with a bell inside, a feather on a string or a toy mouse filled with catnip are great toys. Cats love a high place off the floor to perch and watch the world. An elevated box or fabric climbing post can suit this purpose, as well as providing a hiding place. A scratching post can encourage stretching and keeping the nails trimmed. A small water fountain is a great source of entertainment to cats, with the added bonus that cats drink more fresh water when it is moving.

### **County Tags**

All dogs and cats, fixed or not fixed, indoor or outdoor, are required by law to have a county license and tag. This county license is required by law to be renewed yearly. We sell the county licenses here, but they also available for sale at the same price at the sheriff's office.

## **Pet Insurance**

PFAH does not have a financial stake in any pet insurance, but we STRONGLY recommend pet insurance for your pet! It is only a matter of time before an illness or an injury will happen to your pet. Wouldn't it be great to have an insurance policy in place in advance, so cost is NOT an issue when something happens?

### **TRUPANION PET INSURANCE**

1-877-589-1863 or [www.trupanion.com](http://www.trupanion.com)

*Trupanion Plan* provides 90% coverage for accidents and illness, hereditary and congenital conditions, diagnostic tests, surgeries, meds and pet supplements, and hospital stays.

Flexible deductible.

There is NO annual payout limit.

Only dogs and cats.

You can activate a FREE 30-day trial, make sure you get a trial certificate from our staff! This FREE 30-day trial MUST be signed by your veterinarian AFTER your pet has been examined.

**ASK FOR YOUR TRUPANION TRIAL CERTIFICATE TODAY!**

### **VPI PET INSURANCE**

1-866-VET-PETS or [www.petinsurance.com](http://www.petinsurance.com)

*Major Medical Plan Comprehensive* covers accidents, illnesses and hereditary conditions.

*Medical Plan Economical* covers accidents and illnesses.

*Injury Plan Emergency* covers accidents only.

*Feline Select Plan* covers the 15 most common cat conditions.

*Wellness Rider* covers a portion of wellness exams, vaccinations, routine testing, microchip, flea/heartworm preventive, dental cleaning, spay/neuter.

Flexible deductible.

There is an annual payout limit (\$14,000).

Dogs, cats, avian and exotic pets.

10-day, money-back guarantee.

**ASK FOR YOUR VPI PET INSURANCE BROCHURE TODAY!**

Thinking of breeding your pet? Here are 7 good reasons **not** to:

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ou probably know that there are too many dogs and cats in the world and too few homes for them. In fact, an estimated eight to ten million dogs and cats enter animal shelters each year, and roughly half are euthanized. While you may not breed your own pets, it's likely you sometime encounter people who are considering breeding *their* pets. What should you tell this well-meaning but misinformed pet owner about breeding? You can offer them seven reasons to decide against it.

**1. The Tragedy of Overpopulation**

Breeding your pet compounds the problem of too many pets for too few homes. Even if you find homes for your litter, you've taken away potential homes from other pets who need them. And in less than a year, animals from your litter could have litters of their own. Pet overpopulation happens one litter at a time.

**2. Purebreds Are Homeless, Too**

Many people believe that the only way to get a purebred dog is to go to a breeder or a pet store, or to breed their own purebred dog. In fact, at least one of every four shelter dogs is purebred! Before you breed your pet visit your local animal shelter or breed-rescue group. To find shelters and rescue groups near you, contact our Companion Animals staff at 202-452-1100 or [hsusca@hsus.org](mailto:hsusca@hsus.org).

**3. You Can't Clone Your Pet**

Some people feel their pet is so special that they want a puppy or kitten just like her. But breeding her does not mean you'll get a carbon copy. Even professional breeders who follow generations of bloodlines can't guarantee that they will get just what they want out of a particular litter.

**4. Good Breeding Is Hard**

Responsible breeding is a complicated process. Breeding your female pet puts her health at risk, and her offspring can fall victim to a variety of genetic defects. That's why, in addition to researching bloodlines, responsible breeders test their animals for genetic defects that can be passed to offspring from seemingly healthy parents. A pedigree does *not* guarantee good health or temperament.

**5. A Litter Is a Handful**

The idea of having cute puppies and kittens around can be tempting. But in reality caring for mom and her litter requires a great deal of time and energy. Because you shouldn't take an animal from his mother before eight weeks of age, you must care for these needy newborns for at least two months.

**6. A Litter Is Expensive**

From food and basic supplies to veterinary exams and vaccinations, raising a litter isn't cheap. And difficult births are not only life threatening for the animals but also costly for you. Even professional breeders are lucky if they break even financially.

**7. A Litter Needs Good Homes**

If you decide to breed your pet, the welfare of the offspring is your responsibility. You must screen potential adopters to ensure that they will provide a safe and permanent home for your pet. And you must watch out for animal hoarders and dog fighters who routinely answer classified ads posing as people who want family pets. Proper screening involves making phone calls and home visits, creating a contract that states your terms and obtaining a signed agreement from the new owner.

For these reasons, most pet owners choose to have their pets spayed or neutered. These procedures involve a relatively small, one-time expense, which is greatly outweighed by their many health and other benefits. To have your pet spayed or neutered, call your veterinarian or local animal shelter. Shelters often offer low-cost spay/neuter services or vouchers.

Baby animals are adorable, but they are also a major responsibility, and each new litter adds to the problem of pet overpopulation.



Support Your Local Animal Shelter



**Celebrate Shelters!**

## **Feline Upper Respiratory Disease**

Upper respiratory infections in cats are highly contagious and are commonly spread amongst cats, particularly cats from a shelter or rescue organization. A cat that lives on its own at your home is unlikely to develop one of these infections, although the infection can spread through contaminated clothing or shoes or by introducing a new cat into your home. Kittens are more likely to contract this illness due to their immature immune systems, and often become sicker than adult cats.

The most common agents that cause these infections are two viruses, Herpesvirus and Calicivirus, and a bacteria called Chlamydia. 90% of upper respiratory infections are viral in nature and will run a course of 7-10 days regardless of treatment. The extent and length of infection depends on the agent that has infected the cats, keeping in mind that multiple agents can infect an animal and will worsen the symptoms. Symptoms include sneezing, nasal discharge, conjunctivitis, cough, oral ulcers, and fever.

Cats can become very congested and may stop eating: cats appetite is strongly associated with their sense of smell. Offering canned food with a strong odor is a good idea. You can also decrease congestion by running a hot shower and placing the cat in the bathroom for 10-15 minutes twice a day. If you notice that your cat is not eating or drinking, is open-mouth breathing, is coughing, or is acting very lethargic - please call us to schedule an appointment.

### **Treatment:**

- antibiotic to treat for secondary bacterial infections that may occur while the body is fighting the virus.
- An antibiotic eye ointment or drop may be prescribed for conjunctivitis.
- Lysine is a supplemental amino acid that has also been found to be helpful in reducing the severity of symptoms - a powder form is added to food or a tasty treat can be given.
- Vaccination: Protection for all three of the infectious organisms are included the feline distemper vaccine. Unfortunately, many pets are exposed to these organisms before they get vaccinated, particularly pets from a shelter or rescue organization.

Also note, once a cat is infected with these organisms, the cat may always carry the disease. The disease may lay dormant in the cat's body, and may recur during time of stress throughout the cat's life. Fortunately, the symptoms typically become less severe as the cat matures.