



# CROWS NEST

Animal Hospital

**“Important Info for your Kitten!”**

## Vaccinations

We recommend vaccinations that protect your cat against:

- Feline panleukopenia
- Common cat flu viruses: feline herpesvirus I and feline calicivirus.

Vaccinations for feline immunodeficiency virus and feline leukaemia are also available, but these are not considered core vaccines.

Kittens require three vaccinations performed three to four weeks apart, ideally at:

- 8-10 weeks
- 12-14 weeks
- And 16-18 weeks



Kittens will not be protected until 14 days after their final injection. To get the best immune response, we recommend that the last kitten vaccination is performed no earlier than 16 weeks of age. Some kittens who start their vaccinations earlier than eight weeks old may be recommended to have four vaccines in total to meet this requirement.

We recommend booster vaccinations:

- Every 12 months for feline herpesvirus and calicivirus.
- Every three years for Feline panleukopenia

If your cats' living situation is deemed "low risk" by a vet, you may only need to vaccinate every three years for all three diseases.

During the vaccination consult, your veterinarian will perform a general health examination and discuss important aspects of preventative care including diet, dental care and parasite control.



## Parasite control

It is essential to protect your feline friend from several common parasites. There are multiple protection options available, please talk to our team for advice on which one is the best for your cat.

### Intestinal worms

Intestinal worms can cause gastrointestinal disease and poor growth in kittens. Kittens must be wormed as follows:

- Every two weeks until they are 12 weeks old, then
- Every month until six months old, then
- Every three to six months for life

There are a variety of products available for worming. Preventatives come in several forms such as tablets or topical products.

### Heartworm

Heartworm spread by mosquitos and can damage your cat's lungs. However, this disease is uncommon in cats, and regular use of preventatives is optional.

### Fleas

Fleas are the most problematic parasite in the world, and year-round protection is required in Sydney. Fleas can cause severe skin disease (flea allergy dermatitis) and can be challenging to diagnose. A cat suffering from flea allergy may never actually be seen with fleas!



There are several new products available that protect your cat against multiple parasites. Speak to your vet about which product suits your cat.

Check the label carefully when you buy a new flea product - some are safe for dogs but toxic if applied to cats. Please ask our vets if you are in doubt.



## Ticks

Paralysis ticks are common in many parts of Sydney, especially near bushland and water. They cause paralysis of all the muscles, and if untreated, pets will die from asphyxiation. Treatment can be expensive and involves the administration of an intravenous antitoxin. Some severely affected cats may need to go onto a ventilator to save them. Ticks are most prevalent from August through to April, but they can be found all year round, and all year round prevention is recommended.



It is exciting that we now have simple to use, effective and safe tick prevention for cats. We also recommend checking your pet for ticks every day. This is done by running your fingertips over the skin and feeling for lumps. Most ticks are found on the head, neck and ears, but you must check the skin all over the cat.

Early treatment for tick poisoning is essential. The sooner they are treated, the less likely your pet may be to have life-threatening complications. If you suspect your pet may have tick poisoning (even if you have not found a tick), please seek immediate veterinary attention.

Signs of tick paralysis may include one or more of the following:

- Coughing or grunting sounds
- Difficult or fast breathing
- Not eating
- Reluctance to jump or even walk
- Vomiting or retching
- Weakness
- Loss or change of voice (meow)
- Wobbly back legs



There are many products available for parasite control these days. We know it can be confusing but are very happy to help you choose the most appropriate product for your cat.

## Pet identification

All cats must be microchipped by law, but in addition to the compulsory NSW register, you can have your pet registered on the national database (the Australian Animal Register, AAR). Make sure your details are kept up-to-date on both registers so that your cat can be reunited with you quickly if he/she is ever lost.

Pets are returned home even faster if they always wear a collar with your phone number engraved on the tag.

## Feeding

There are many commercial foods designed to meet the exact nutritional requirements of growing kittens. The brands do vary in quality, with the premium brands aiming to provide higher quality ingredients to the growing cat. Choose a "kitten" or "growth" variety until the cat reaches 12 months old.



At eight weeks old, kittens need to be fed three times per day. From four to five months of age, this can be reduced to two larger meals per day. Meal size guidelines can be found on the food label. Any change of diet must be made gradually, over three to five days, to prevent your new kitten from getting diarrhoea.

It is very important for long-term health to keep your adult cat in lean, muscular body condition. Please ask our vets to learn more about healthy body condition scores in cats.



## Diet and dental care

Your cat's diet can influence the health of their teeth and gums.

Never feed your cat cooked bones as these are much more likely to cause problems. An alternative to consider is dental dry food, such as Hills t/d or Royal Canin Dental.

The "gold standard" in dental health is daily brushing with a pet toothpaste, and kittenhood is the perfect time to introduce this to your cat.



## Desexing

Desexed pets are less likely to spray urine, wander, fight or get injured. Desexed cats are protected from certain cancers, and females won't show noisy calling behaviour when on heat.

We recommend male and female cats be desexed by six months of age. Your cat will come into hospital in the morning (without breakfast), have their operation under general anaesthesia and go home the same evening (males) or following day (females).

## Cat behaviour and training

If your cat's basic needs are not met, they may feel stressed. Stress can affect both their health and behaviour. This is particularly important for indoor cats.

We recommend cats are kept indoors to protect them from fighting, car accidents and infectious diseases, and to protect the local wildlife.

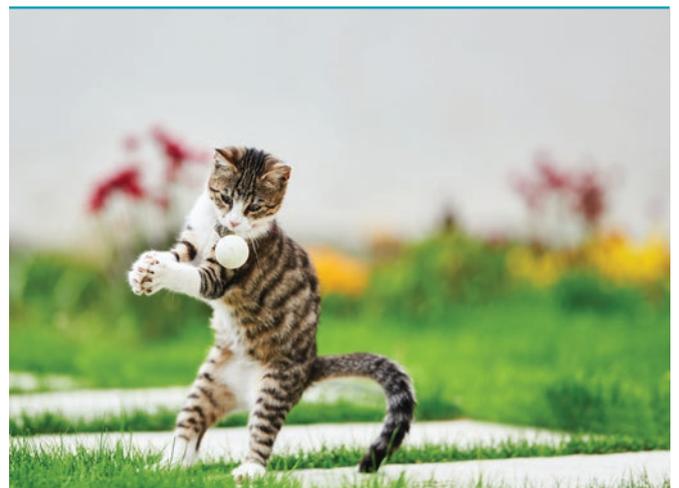


The following tips will help your cat stay happy and healthy.

- Place food and litter boxes so that other animals (or humans!) cannot sneak up on your cat while they use them.
- Keep food and litter boxes away from noisy appliances.
- Food and water should be fresh, and the litter box cleaned every day. Cats require at least one litterbox each!



- Give your cat some special cat scratching furniture to help them keep their claws short and express normal behaviours acceptably.
- Praise them profusely when you see them use the scratch mat or post to let them know that this is theirs to use.
- Provide places to hide, to climb and to look out of windows.
- Toys allow cats to pretend they are catching their dinner and can be as simple as crumpled paper balls, empty cardboard boxes or ping pong balls. String, foil or buttons are potential hazards and are not recommended.



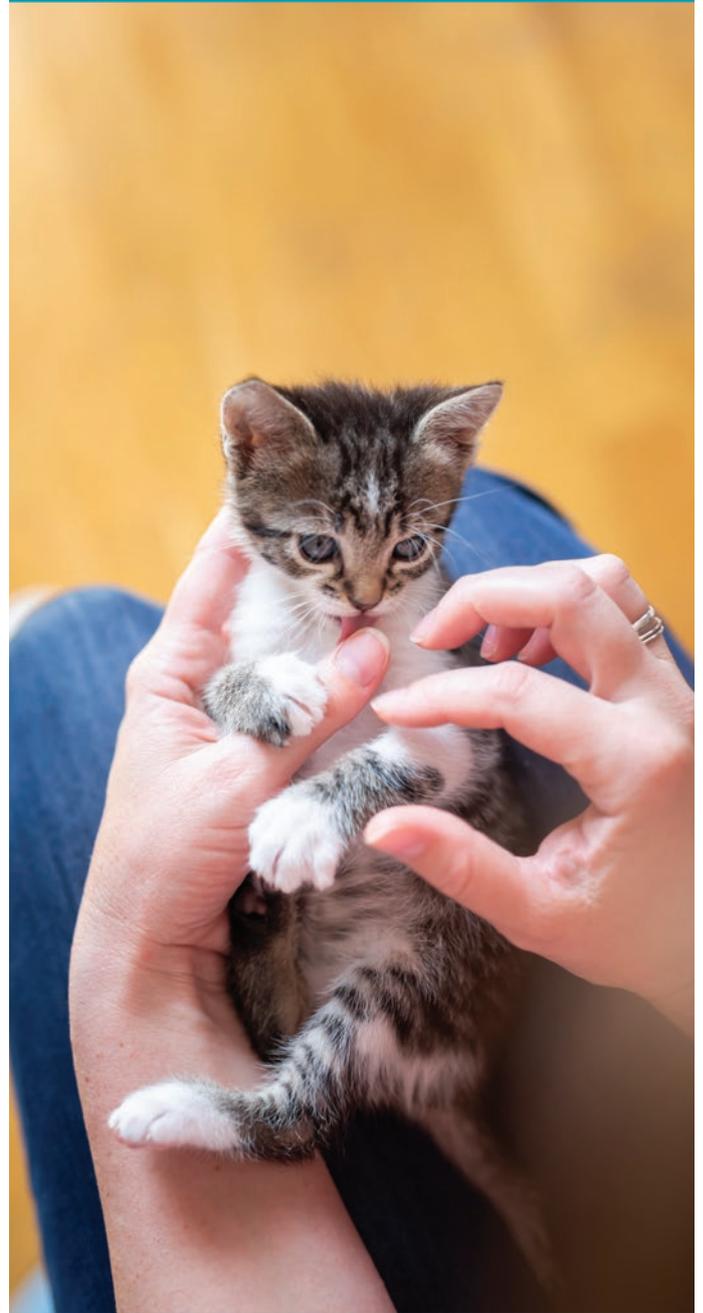


### **Pet Health Insurance**

Pet insurance can be a lifesaver. Modern veterinary care is surprisingly advanced, and we can offer a high level of care if your cat becomes seriously ill or injured.

However, unlike the human health care system, there is no government funding to help pay for the treatment, and it can become expensive.

A number of companies offer pet health insurance to help you give your pet the best care when they need it.



If you ever see your kitten chewing on lily flowers/leaves, please contact your vet as they are extremely poisonous.

- Cats respond to praise, not punishment. Reprimands only work if you catch your cat "in the act". If you do catch you cat making a mistake, it is better to create a distraction by making a loud noise or throwing something (NOT at the cat!) that will attract their attention, but not toward you.

Veterinary behaviourist Kirsty Seksel's book 'Training your cat' is designed to teach you how to have fun with your new kitten as well as train them to become a well-behaved family member.



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