



20136 Icenic Trail  
Lakeville, MN 55044  
Phone: (952) 469-1525  
Fax: (952) 469-5056

[www.dakotapethospital.com](http://www.dakotapethospital.com)

**Our services:**

General Medicine	Surgery
Disease Prevention	Dentistry
Laboratory Services	Boarding
Hospitalization	Grooming

For after hours emergencies, please call:

South Metro Animal Emergency Care  
14690 Pennock Avenue  
Apple Valley, MN 55124  
Phone: (952) 953-3737

[www.smaec.com](http://www.smaec.com)

# Vaccinations

Each kitten is an individual. The Doctor will discuss with you the best schedule for your kitten based on factors such as age, health, and the amount of exposure your kitten will have with other animals. If you have any questions about your kitten's schedule please ask.

## Vaccine Reactions

Vaccine reactions are allergic type reactions, which occur infrequently in dogs and cats after being given a vaccination. A pet being quiet and running a mild fever is not an allergic type reaction and lasts only about 24 hours. It is NOT normal (and is considered a reaction) for an animal to develop vomiting and/or diarrhea from a vaccine. Please call if your animal has any vomiting or diarrhea after a vaccine.

Another type of vaccination reaction causes itching of the face and ears and sometimes the entire face may swell. Animals having this type of reaction will rub their faces on the floor. While not life threatening this makes the animal extremely uncomfortable. It is best to bring the animal back to the hospital for observation and medication to make it more comfortable. This type of reaction may occur anywhere from 6-24 hours after the vaccination.

### **THIS IS AN EMERGENCY!**

Anaphylactic shock is the most severe and dangerous type of allergic reaction. It may occur not only after a vaccination but can also occur if an animal is severely allergic to an antibiotic or insect sting. This type of reaction typically occurs within 1 hour.

Cats will start vomiting repeatedly, usually within 15-30 minutes. They may start panting, drooling and or have a difficult time breathing (their tongue and gum color may turn purple.)

If you have already left the hospital - return immediately. If the hospital is closed, go immediately to the South Metro Animal Emergency Hospital (952-953-3737) located in Apple Valley. Fortunately this type of reaction is extremely rare, but when it does occur it must be treated immediately.

If you are ever concerned as to whether or not your pet is having a reaction, call us and ask.

## Why should I vaccinate my cat?

The principal of a vaccination is to stimulate the body's defenses. Kittens are protected against many infectious diseases by antibodies present in their mother's milk which they receive in the first few hours of life. This protection from maternal antibodies lasts less than 3 months. For this reason the vaccination schedule starts with the initial injection around the age of 8 weeks (2 months).

## **Why is it necessary to have repeat vaccinations?**

Many people believe that if they have their pets vaccinated when they are young, the immunity they receive will protect them for the rest of their lives. Unfortunately this is not the case. To maintain protection regular booster vaccinations are required. Re-vaccination stimulates the immune response so that protection is offered for an additional period. Without these regular vaccinations, your cat's immune system may not be able to protect it from serious diseases.

## **What are we vaccinating against?**

**Rabies** is a deadly, yet preventable, viral disease most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. The virus attacks nerve tissue, and death always occurs once a rabies-infected animal shows signs of the disease. All warm-blooded animals (cats, dogs, livestock, and wildlife) can become infected with the rabies virus. Rabies vaccines are required by law.

The vaccines listed below are given together as one “combo” vaccine – commonly called a Feline Distemper Vaccine.

**Feline Rhinotracheitis, Calici Virus, Chlamydia Psittaci** is easily passed from one cat to another by direct or indirect contact, such as droplets in the air from coughing or sneezing. Cats with respiratory disease may have watery or thick discharge from the nose and eyes, nose and mouth sores, fever, lethargy and loss of appetite.

**Feline Panleukopenia** commonly called feline distemper, is more commonly seen in young cats, but can affect cats at any age. Feline Panleukopenia can affect many parts of any unprotected cat's body causing fever, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, weakness, tremors and loss of coordination.

Recommended vaccine – if your cat goes outdoors.

### **Feline Leukemia Virus**

FeLV suppresses a cat's immune system leaving it unable to fight off other infections. FeLV can also cause severe anemia or cancer in some cats. While some cats may recover from a brief FeLV infection, if permanent infection occurs, death almost always results.

# **Spaying and Neutering Your Pet**

When spaying and neutering, certain reproductive organs are removed. If your cat is a female, the veterinarian will remove her ovaries, fallopian tubes, and uterus. The proper name for this operation is an ovariohysterectomy, although it is commonly called “spaying.”

The testicles are removed from a male animal. This operation is properly called an orchidectomy, although it is usually referred to as castration, or simply “neutering.”

## **What are the advantages?**

There is no need to confine your pets during ‘heat’ periods, and no unwanted litters to take care of or to find a home. Surgical spaying eliminates a female’s chances of developing uterine infections and, if spayed before her first heat, will decrease her likelihood of developing mammary cancer by 95%.

Neutered males usually become less aggressive and less likely to spray or mark areas. Neutering also helps decrease males’ vocalizing.

## **Will it change my pet’s intelligence or disposition?**

The operation has no effect on intelligence. And most neutered pets tend to be more gentle and affectionate. They become less interested in other animals and spend more time with the family.

## **Will it make my pet fat?**

Removing the ovaries or testicles does affect metabolism. This seems to make many neutered pets put on weight more easily if permitted to overeat. The diet of every cat should be carefully regulated to prevent excess weight. This is particularly true after a neuter or spay operation.

## **Is the operation painful?**

Spaying and neutering operations are performed painlessly while your pet is under general anesthesia. After the surgery there may be some discomfort, but this is part of the normal healing process and can be controlled with medication.

## **When should my pet have the operation?**

We recommend that a female be spayed before her first estrus or ‘heat’ period or after she is 4 months old and 4 pounds. A male can be neutered at 4 months and 4 pounds. Your veterinarian can recommend the best time for your pet

## **Scratching**

Scratching is a natural behavior for cats. Cats scratch to stretch their muscles, shed old cuticles, sharpen their claws, and leave scent marks. Even if declawed, cats retain the instinct to scratch. Scratching posts provide cats with an outlet for their instinct to scratch while at the same time saving your furniture and carpets! In order to choose the right scratching post for your cat, consider the following:

### **What does your cat like to scratch?**

Choose a scratching post that is similar to the material your cat most likes to scratch. Most, but not all, cats prefer scratching posts made out of rough material they can shred. Sisal (a coarse natural fiber) scratching posts are ideal because they are satisfying to scratch and tough enough to stand up to repeated use. Vertical or upright and horizontal or flat scratching posts are available in a variety of sizes and materials including sisal, carpet and cardboard. Cats that scratch chair legs or the corners of your couch may prefer a vertical scratching post. Make sure that vertical scratching posts are tall enough so that your cat can stretch up to scratch. Cats that scratch rugs and carpets may prefer a horizontal scratching post or mat. Scratching posts should be stabilized to ensure that they don't move or tip over and scare your cat while she is using them.

### **Where does your cat scratch?**

Cats scratch to leave scent marks that define their territory and tell other cats they have passed through. They will often scratch prominent objects near sleeping areas and room entrances. Therefore, scratching posts should be located in these and other "public" parts of the house that the whole family uses. In multi-cat households there should be several scratching posts, both vertical and horizontal, located throughout the house. These posts should be placed in areas where the cats congregate and along their routes to common areas such as food and water bowls, and litter boxes. Setting up multiple scratching posts provides the cats with an acceptable place to leave their mark without ruining furniture and carpets.

### **What if my cat won't use the scratching post?**

Considering your cat's demonstrated preferences, substitute similar objects for her to scratch. Place the scratching post near the object you want the cat to stop scratching. Cover the inappropriate objects with something your cat will find unappealing, such as double sided sticky tape, aluminum foil, sheets of sandpaper or a plastic carpet runner with the pointy side up. You may give the objects an objectionable odor by attaching cotton balls soaked with a citrus scent or perfume. Don't use anything that could harm the cat if she ingests it and be careful with strong odors because you don't want the nearby acceptable objects to also smell unpleasant.

When your cat is consistently using the scratching post, it can be moved very gradually to a location more suitable to you. It's best, however, to keep the scratching post as close to your cat's preferred scratching locations as possible.

# Parasites

## Intestinal Parasites

Intestinal worms are a very common problem in kittens. These worms are parasites; in other words, they live at the expense of their host's health. Intestinal parasitic infections may cause growth disorders, anemia, diarrhea and vomiting in kittens. **Prevention of these parasites is essential to protect not only your kitten's health, but also the health of other animals and humans that your kitten may come in contact with.**

A stool sample (fecal) should be checked for parasites at your kitten's first visit. A sample, about the size of a marble, can be dropped off at the clinic at any time but an appointment will be needed in order to prescribe de-worming medication if needed. *Yearly fecal checks are highly recommended.*

Some examples of parasites we test for are roundworms, tapeworms, and hookworms.

## External Parasites

Infestation with external parasites can cause far more than just skin irritation. Some can transmit serious infectious diseases to your pet. There are effective and safe treatments available, which can be used regularly on a long-term basis to protect your pet.

Some examples of parasites your cat may have include fleas, ticks, lice, and mites.

## Heartworm Disease

Heartworm disease is a deadly disease for cats. As little as one adult worm can be fatal for a cat. Since there is no treatment for feline heartworm disease, we recommend preventing heartworm disease with a topical product called Revolution®. Revolution® is especially recommended for outdoor cats.

Signs of Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease include:

- Collapse
- Convulsion
- Coughing
- Diarrhea
- Difficulty Breathing
- Sudden Death
- Vomiting

## **Litter Boxes**

You want to provide your cat with a positive experience when using the litter box. If your cat has a negative experience while using the litter box, for example the litter is dirty or something startles her, the cat may avoid that box in the future.

### **Litter Box Hygiene**

Cats are fastidiously clean. *Most cats will avoid using a dirty litter box in favor of a cleaner place.* That "cleaner place" may turn out to be your carpet, bed, or sofa. To prevent house-soiling the litter box must be scooped daily, fully emptied weekly, and washed with **mild soap** and **hot water** monthly.

### **Litter Box Type and Size**

Litter boxes are available in a variety of sizes and shapes. *Cats generally prefer large, uncovered, easily accessible litter boxes.* As a rule the litter box should be large enough for your cat to stand up (on all fours) and turn around.

Covered litter boxes are also available. Owners may use covered boxes to keep their dog out of the cat litter or to keep litter "out of sight". Some cats may prefer covered litter boxes because of the added privacy they provide. Remember that covered litter boxes will concentrate odors more than uncovered boxes.

### **Litter Substrate**

There are many different substrates or litters on the market. *Research has shown that most cats prefer fine-grained, unscented litters. Many cats are put off by the odor of scented or deodorant litters.* This is also a good reason not to place room deodorizers or air fresheners near the litter box. Odor should not be a problem if the litter box is kept clean. If you find the odor offensive, the cat will also find it offensive and may not want to eliminate there. **Remember, litter boxes should be scooped at least once a day.**

### **Litter Box Location and Number**

*Cats need quiet and privacy when using their litter box.* Litter boxes should be placed away from appliances or air ducts that could suddenly come on and startle the cat. They also should be placed so that humans and other animals can't "sneak up" on the cat.

*The litter box must be easily accessible.* Don't place the litter box in "tight-spots" such as under vanity sinks or low tables. Remember, the cat needs to be able to stand and move around comfortably in the litter box. Consider the path the cat will take to reach the litter box. Don't place it so that she has to climb over furniture or other animals to use it. For example, a litter box that is placed near the dog's bed or behind the couch may not get much use.

### **The Golden Rule is "one litter box per cat, plus one".**

Problems such as urine spraying can be prevented or reduced by providing multiple litter boxes. Each cat requires a place to eliminate and mark territory. In homes with more than one story, litter boxes must be available on each level of the home. Cats don't like to walk far to get to the nearest litter box.

## Kitten Proofing Your Home

One of the most important things you can do for your kitten is give him a safe environment to live, play and explore. You can think of young cats much like you think of toddlers: they are not entirely stable on their feet, they'll put almost anything into their mouths, and they're curious and get into everything.

\*Keep toxic and dangerous materials, such as cleaning solutions, antifreeze, and medications in a locked cabinet or in a room that your pet doesn't have access to. Don't trust an unlocked cabinet near the ground.

\*Some of the prettiest plants inside your house or in your yard may be poisonous to your kitten. Keep azalea, daffodil, rhododendron, oleander, mistletoe, hydrangea, morning glory, dieffenbachia, sago palm, Easter lily, and yew plants out of your house.

\*Patrol your house keeping an eye out for small holes or gaps in floorboards, walls, baseboard, heating vents and anywhere else a small animal could squeeze into and get stuck. While you're at it, look over your furniture for potential hazards.

\*Try to remove everything that is small enough to be chewed and swallowed, including paper clips, coins, rubber bands, staples, pen caps, thread, dental floss, earrings, needles and thumbtacks. Also be aware that kittens can electrocute themselves by chewing on electrical cords.

\*Young animals need a safe haven to stay in when they can't be supervised. You can confine them to a crate or take one room of the house and make it into your pet's home for when you're gone. It should include a soft, warm place to sleep and plenty of toys, and it should be regularly examined for the hazards listed above.

\* Keep toilet lids shut. Small pets can fall in and injure or drown themselves when they try to drink and automatic toilet bowl cleaners can be harmful or even fatal if drunk in large amounts or by a young animal.

### Perches

*Cats like to climb and be elevated from ground level. They are very curious creatures. A perch will provide your cat with a safe and private place to watch the action from above.*

A perch is anything that allows your cat to lie, sit, sleep or look outside from above. Perches come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. Perches can attach to the windowsill or can be custom built freestanding pieces of furniture.

You can place a couch, sofa, chair, or sturdy table in front of a window, so your cat can look outside. To make the scenery more attractive for, you could hang a bird feeder in the yard, plant flowers to attract bees, butterflies, and other insects.

## Feeding Your Cat

### The High Points

1. *Cats are carnivores*, never meant to eat high carbohydrate diets and have no nutritional requirement for them.
2. *Commercial diets – especially dry diets – are too high in carbohydrates*
3. *Cats eating dry food are chronically dehydrated*, and do not drink enough water to properly re-hydrate themselves
4. Dry diets are not that helpful in preventing dental disease
5. *Experts are beginning to warn against feeding cats dry diets*
6. If your cat is addicted to dry food or is picky, it is important to *make changes carefully – don't let your cat stop eating in protest*
7. Meal feeding all canned food or canned food with some dry will allow you to more easily control the amount and kind of food your cat gets.

### Dry food is best, right?

Dry pet food is a dehydrated and processed mix of grains, meats, and added vitamins and minerals. Dry foods are typically 30-60% carbohydrate in composition. What isn't well known among cat owners is that *a requirement for carbohydrates has never been proven in the cat* (in contrast to dogs and people). Cats are carnivores, and in the wild, eat nothing but meaty little rodents, bugs, birds and lizards. Our domesticated cats, on the other hand, are fed mixtures of meat and grain that produce a balanced diet over the long term. Many believe that those grains, aside from providing 'artificial' balance, may be contributing to problems in the long run.

Cats descended from desert animals that depended on their food to provide needed water. Their kidneys are adapted to this desert environment to conserve water and concentrate the wastes into the urine. Their brains are not as sensitive to thirst as other animals, since in their normal environment they could do nothing about their thirst. When cats don't get enough water from food or additional water intake, some feel that cats spend much of their lives chronically dehydrated, which is not good for those kidneys or the rest of the body.

One common problem which seems to respond to more water in the food is the very frustrating FLUTD (Lower urinary tract disease). Most doctors recommend feeding canned food only to these cats, to increase water going into the body and out through the bladder. Could this be a signal that cats don't do well on dry food?

Another way to increase water intake in cats is to have a circulating water fountain available. Many cats will drink more water from these fountains than from bowls.

Also, many people tend to leave dry food out all the time, leaving their cats to 'free feed'. As convenient as it may be, this is a potentially harmful practice for the cat! Most cats given food all the time eat more than they should, and this is behind a growing epidemic of obese cats.

In addition, free feeding these high carbohydrate meals has been suggested to contribute to the rising incidence of diabetes in cats.

There is excellent information on feeding your cat at [www.catinfo.org](http://www.catinfo.org)

## **Grooming Your Cat**

Cats often need help with grooming. You can make grooming fun, with lots of petting, praise, and treats. Comb gently from front-to-back and reassure your cat with a soothing voice.

### **Mats**

If you find mats in your cat's fur, never try to cut them out because you could cut your cat's skin. It is better to work out a mat with a grooming comb.

### **Trimming your cat's nails**

Nail trims are an easy way to reduce damage from scratching. You can clip off the sharp tips of your cat's claws as often as necessary. There are several types of nail trimmers designed especially for cats. These are better than your own nail clippers because they won't crush the nail bed.

Before trimming your cat's claws, accustom her to having her paws handled and squeezed.

Apply a small amount of pressure to the cat's paw, with your thumb on top of her paw and your index finger underneath, until a claw is extended. Near the cat's nail bed you should be able to see a pink area, called the "quick", which contains small blood vessels. **Don't** cut into the pink portion of the nail because it will bleed and be painful for the cat. Cut off just the sharp tip to dull the claw. As your cat becomes accustomed to having her nails clipped you can trim all four feet at the same time.

### **Brushing Your Cat's Teeth**

You will need a soft-bristled tooth brush and veterinary toothpaste. *Human toothpastes and baking soda may cause problems.*

Start by offering her a taste of the veterinary toothpaste. The next time, let her taste the toothpaste, and then run your finger along the gums of the upper teeth. Repeat the process with the tooth brush. Do not try to brush the entire mouth at first. If all that your pet lets you brush is the outside of the upper teeth, you are still addressing the most important area of periodontal disease - prevention. Even with the best tooth brushing, some cats may still need an occasional professional cleaning, just like humans.

# **Exercising Your Cat**

## **Why play with your cat?**

- To develop a bond with your cat.
- To increase your cat's quality of life.
- To help improve behavior and health, reduce the incidence of obesity, and prevent future problems.
- To make your cat active during the day so that he/she will sleep longer and bother you less during the night.
- To help your cat vent excess energy, which should decrease the "wild frenzies" that often occur, especially in the late evenings.
- To teach your cat to play in a controlled environment and decrease the likeliness that he/she will "play bite" or attack you or others.

## **Helpful hints**

- Do not reward bad behavior with play. Only elicit play when your cat is calm, quiet, and behaving appropriately.
- Do not use your hands, fingers, or other body parts as toys, or kitty will learn to bite and scratch them. Stop play that gets too rough, and resume when your cat is calm, quiet, and behaving appropriately.

# **Introducing a New Cat**

The new cat should be given his/her own room containing the necessities; food, water, a litter box, a scratching post, perch, and toys. The newcomer should be kept in his/her room for at least one week. The cats need time to get familiar by smelling one another without coming face to face. Although your cat will smell the new cat's scent on you, you may better acquaint the cats with one another's scent by giving each a towel to lay on and then swapping the towels after a couple of days.

When the cats have gotten familiar with one another's scent, begin feeding them on opposite sides of the closed door. This creates a positive association between food and the other cat's scent. When the cats are eating comfortably at the door you can start introducing visual contact.

Allow gradual visual contact by opening the door a crack. Secure the door so the cats may look at one another but not walk through. It is common for cats to hiss at each other initially but if they become aggressive or extremely hostile close the door and leave them alone for a few hours. Crack the door open again when the cats are relaxed. When they can look at one another calmly, open the door wider. After the cats can look at each other without hissing or becoming agitated, open the door and let them meet while you watch from a distance. If problems occur, return the new cat to his/her room and close the door. Gradually increase open door time until the cats are comfortable with each other. Keep the room available to the new cat so he/she has a safe place to retreat to if he/she feels threatened.