



Cat & Kitten Handbook

Congratulations on Your New Cat!

The doctors and staff of Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center & Urgent Care have put this information together to start you off right with your new pet; whether you are raising a kitten or adopting an adult cat. This handbook is designed to be a resource for any questions you may have regarding the care and training of your new cat.

If you are bringing home a kitten, or a cat with no vaccine history, you will need to bring them in for a series of examinations and vaccines over the next two to three months. Examinations are the perfect time for you to discuss with the doctor any questions you may have about raising your cat. Our goal is for you to leave each office visit feeling confident and informed about your cat's health and care requirements.

Please bring this book to every examination.



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1. Have your cat immunized according to the Feline Immunization schedule

A. FVRCP (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, Panleukopenia [Distemper])

This immunization is given several times to kittens, beginning at age 6 to 8 weeks, until age 14 to 16 weeks old, according to the following schedule:

Date: _____

Age in weeks: 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

Cats older than 12 weeks at the time of the first immunizations only require the 1st immunization and a single booster shot 3 to 4 weeks later.

B. FeLV (Feline Leukemia Virus)

If your cat goes outdoors at all, they should be immunized against the feline leukemia virus. All cats should have a blood test done to be sure they are not asymptomatic carriers of the virus. Cats that are not carriers of the virus based on the blood test get a series of two injections. The first shot is given at 12 weeks or older; the second shot is given 3 to 4 weeks later.

Date: _____

Age in weeks: 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

C. Rabies

If your cat will go outdoors at all, they should be immunized against rabies. This immunization cannot be administered until the kitten is at least 16 weeks (4 months) of age or older.

Date: _____

Age in weeks: 16 17 18 19 20

After your kitten completes the series of immunizations listed above, the next immunization of each type is given a year later. Subsequent immunizations are given every three years to maintain your cat's immunity. The FeLV vaccine is the only exception and must be administered annually.

2. Feline leukemia virus (FeLV) and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) prevention

Two of the most devastating viral diseases for cats are feline leukemia (FeLV) and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV). FIV is related to the human AIDS virus (HIV) and FeLV can cause lymphoma and leukemia in cats that test positive.

Neither one of these diseases is transmissible to people. Both of these viruses are transmitted through blood and saliva from one cat to another.

There is no cure for either of these diseases, although simple steps can be taken at home to reduce the risk of the development of secondary problems once it is known that a cat is a carrier of either virus. For this reason we recommend all new kittens and cats have a blood test done to determine their status for these diseases. Knowing early on helps us to treat your cat appropriately to help them live a healthy, long life.

3. Feline Immunization Safety Update

For years routine immunization of cats, dogs, and people has been the basis for preventative health care. This information reflects the most recent research into the safety and potential side effects of the various feline immunizations to help ensure the long term health of your pet.

The disease for which your cat is at risk

Cats that venture outdoors are at risk for contracting any infectious feline disease.

This includes two feline upper respiratory infections (feline viral rhinotracheitis and calicivirus), panleukopenia (otherwise known as feline distemper), feline leukemia, and rabies.

Effective immunizations exist for all of these diseases. These diseases are potentially fatal infections for which no effective medical cure exists.

Rabies is a zoonotic disease, meaning it can be transmitted from animals to humans. While the feline leukemia virus is not zoonotic, it is fatal during the first three years for over 50% of the cats that contract it. Cats that live strictly indoors by themselves or who live with other cats that are also strictly indoors, are not at risk for contracting feline leukemia or rabies. These two infections are spread only by being bitten by other animals.

Recent evidence about vaccine-associated sarcoma

Sarcomas are a class of tumor that develops underneath the skin or inside the body. Various studies have implicated the immunizations against the feline leukemia virus and rabies as causing sarcomas at the site of immunization in a small percentage of cats. The estimate ranges from as low as [1 in 2,000 cats up to 1 in 10,000 cats](#) (Corey Saba, 2009). These tumors first appear as a small bump under the skin where the immunization was given, and can occur any time from a few weeks to over two years after immunization. If detected early they can be removed. If they are in an advanced stage before surgery is attempted, there is a high likelihood of re-growth after surgical removal.

Our plan to protect your cat's safety

- For indoor cats that never go outside we no longer recommend immunization against the feline leukemia virus or rabies.
- Immunizations are now given in different locations to further reduce the amount of subcutaneous irritation at any one location as a result of immunization.

As always, our concern is the overall health and well-being of your cat. Please feel free to discuss this information with any of our doctors if you have any further questions.

4. Intestinal Parasites

Cats of any age are susceptible to infestation by several types of intestinal parasites. Parasites can be transmitted in the mother's womb, nursing, through direct contact with an infected animal, or by eating a parasitized animal (such as a mouse). The most common way to transmit intestinal parasites is through contact with an infested animal's feces. These parasites can lead to general problems like malnutrition, listlessness, and failure to grow properly, as well as specific problems like poor appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, flaky skin, and the appearance of a "pot belly". Cats with intestinal parasites may also be more susceptible to other infections.

Please bring in a fresh stool so it can be examined microscopically for signs of parasites. If they are present we will administer the proper medication. The following are tips for collecting and submitting a proper fecal sample:

- Samples should be a minimum of 5 grams or the size of a U.S. quarter or 1 teaspoon.
- A quality sample should be fresh, no more than 6 hours old.
- If refrigerated the feces is good for no more than 24 hours.
- Avoid contaminants, such as soil or lawn chemicals when collecting your sample as these can affect the integrity of the sample.
- The sample should not have rocks or yard debris in it; cat litter is ok. If submitting a liquid stool it must be free of cat litter (off of carpet, linoleum, or cement is acceptable).

It is important that samples be submitted appropriately. Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center & Urgent Care has collection kits free of charge. However, you can also use:

- Double plastic bags
- Small Tupperware containers

Please do **NOT** use:

- Glass
- Wipes/paper towels

- Medication jars (especially antibiotics - these can contaminate the sample)

The fecal sample results will be available after 48 to 72 hours. You will receive a call with the results within that timeframe.

5. External Parasites (fleas and ticks)

Both indoor and outdoor cats are exposed to fleas. Fleas live an average of 100 days; in certain instances they can survive for a year and can lay up to 50 eggs a day. An entire new generation of fleas can develop monthly; in just a few months several fleas can multiply into millions! Additionally, ticks are found in this area year round and can transmit several diseases to cats. The following are the most effective ways to prevent these infections.



A. Topical methods of prevention

These are called “spot-on” applications. The treatments are supplied in small, single-dose plastic tubes and are applied monthly to a cat’s coat, on back of their neck to prevent fleas. Frontline and Revolution also help to prevent ticks. There are 3 topical treatments that are effective in preventing flea infestations in cats:

- Frontline: For the prevention and treatment of fleas and ticks.
- Advantage: For the prevention and treatment of fleas.
- Revolution: For the prevention and treatment of fleas, the prevention of heartworm, and the treatment of roundworm, hookworm, and ear mites.

Please be very cautious regarding certain topical flea products not sold at a veterinarian office. Many, including products labeled for dogs only, are extremely toxic and can cause severe reactions in cats, including death.

B. Systemic methods of prevention

- Capstar: A tablet that kills existing, adult flea populations and is effective for 24 hours. Capstar, in combination with a topical treatment, provides an integrated approach to flea prevention and control.

6. Spaying and Neutering

Every year, thousands of cats are put to death needlessly because of overpopulation. Spaying and neutering is necessary to end this crisis. A female cat should be spayed and a male cat should be neutered between four and six months of age. This will help ensure that you are doing your part to help control pet overpopulation, and will help your cat stay as healthy as possible throughout its life.

The spay surgery is the removal of both the ovaries and uterus. Spaying helps reduce the risk of certain types of cancer, uterine infections, and eliminates the heat cycle with its accompanying behavior.

The neuter surgery is the removal of both testicles. Neutering will reduce the tendency for your male cat to mark his territory by spraying urine. It also helps to cut down on cancer, roaming, and can reduce his tendency to get into cat fights, which is a major cause of the spread of FeLV and FIV. Your cat should be spayed or neutered when they are 3 to 6 months old.

7. Microchip Identification

Recently, the use of microchip implants to assist in pet identification has become more widespread. These are small chips, about the size of a grain of rice. Each chip has its own unique number encoded in it, which can be detected with a hand held scanner.

The procedure is simple: with a pet completely awake the chip is injected using a syringe. The microchip is placed under a pet's skin between the shoulder blades - just like any other injection. This may be done at the same time that other injections are given, such as immunizations. It's as quick and easy as that!

A lifetime membership in the national registry is included in the cost of the microchip. Once you are registered your pet and contact information are linked to the code number for that microchip. In the event that your pet is lost and taken to an animal shelter, the microchip can be scanned to identify your pet and subsequently returned to you.

Microchips can be implanted anytime after a kitten is 16 weeks old. After the implantation the microchip remains under the skin for life. It is so small that in most pets it cannot be detected at all without the use of a scanner, although in a few cats it can be felt as a small bump under the skin. Microchips have not been shown to cause irritation to the skin or other problems where injected.

An office visit fee is not required in order to have a microchip implanted in your pets. If you have further questions about microchips, please feel free to ask one of our staff members.

8. Pet Insurance

Nobody ever plans to have a sick or injured pet, but you can easily have a financial plan for if and when it occurs. Here at Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center & Urgent Care, we strive to keep your pet healthy and happy for his or her entire lifetime. Unfortunately, there are certain things

you just can't plan for or predict. Major illnesses or injuries are always unexpected, and like many veterinary practices, we often see responsible pet owners struggle with the costs associated with treating these conditions.

One in two pets will experience a major illness or injury.

Pet insurance is one way pet owners receive help with these unexpected costs. One of the pet insurance companies we recommend to our clients is [Trupanion](#). Trupanion offers simple and effective protection for the high risk and high cost of unexpected accidents and illnesses that go above and beyond the routine care that can be planned and budgeted for. If your pet becomes sick or injured, Trupanion pays 90% of the actual cost of treatment, less the exam fee and chosen deductible, with no dollar limits on reimbursement. This includes surgeries, diagnostic tests, medications, and hospital stays as well as therapeutic pet foods and dietary supplements purchased through our hospital.

Questions All Pet Owners Should Ask BEFORE Signing a Policy:

- Is the policy and information easy to understand?
- What IS covered and what IS NOT covered by the different policies.
- Which policy fits your needs the best?
- What are the co-insurance and deductible options for the policy?
- Will this fit your financial situation if you need to file a claim?
- Does the company pay out based on the actual vet bill or by a benefit schedule? (Understand the difference.)
- Are there coverage limits per incident, per year, or per lifetime? (If so, understand what they are.)
- Are conditions that were diagnosed in one year, considered pre-existing conditions the next year?
- Is the company licensed in your state and do they have a good reputation?

We hope your pet will live a long life, free from accidents or illnesses that require medical treatment. But because we know pets get sick and injured (unfortunately, we see it every day), we recommend that you thoroughly research your pet insurance options.

There are many different companies that offer pet insurance. Every pet insurance company requires you to pay your veterinarian up front and then submit a claim; after which they will send you reimbursement based on your plan. Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center & Urgent Care accepts and works with all pet insurance companies. We have a streamlined system in place to submit claims and records to the pet insurance company of your choice. Our goal is to make the process as quick and easy as possible for our clients.

With a complete physical exam with a veterinarian from Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center & Urgent Care, your pet is eligible to receive 30 free days of coverage from Trupanion – with no limits and no waiting periods.

Scratching & Declawing Options/Alternatives

Some cats use their claws destructively indoors by clawing the furniture or carpet. For those cats there are solutions to help curtail this habit.

Scratching is a completely natural and normal behavior for your cat. It helps sharpen their claws, acts as a scent and visual marker, and aids in stretching. Scratching is important to cats and feels good, however it can be destructive to a household and hard to control. By providing your cat with alternatives to your furniture, you can help discourage destructive scratching.

The first step is to provide some acceptable scratching material for your cat. Cat trees are ideal because not only can your cat scratch it, but it also gives them something to climb and perch on. Cats love high places from which to view their surroundings. Make sure the cat tree is stable enough for your cat to run, jump, and climb on and has suitable material for their claws to dig into.



There are also horizontal posts available that can be placed on the ground for scratching, as well as vertical posts that hang from the door. These come in many different materials such as carpet, sisal rope, and corrugated cardboard. You may need to experiment to see which kind your cat likes best but a variety of options is ideal to prevent boredom.

If your cat has already started scratching furniture and carpet in your house, you may want to choose a cat tree or scratching post that is covered in a different material to avoid confusion. Sisal rope is usually very popular with cats. You will want to have scratching options placed throughout your home and especially near or in front of spots your cat has already decided to claw at. You can slowly move the tree or post a little bit each day to where you would eventually like it to be located.

To help entice your cat to use their new post, try rubbing some catnip on it. When you see them scratching a post or playing on their tree, make sure to reward the good behavior with treats. This will help encourage appropriate scratching. It is usually not helpful to force a cat's paws onto a tree or scratching post.

There are a variety of ways to help make areas you do not want your cat to scratch less appealing. While you are training your cat to use their new scratching materials you can place foil, plastic sheeting, or double sided tape on or around furniture. Cats dislike sticky surfaces so double sided tape is an excellent deterrent. If you do not want to place double sided tape directly on your furniture, you can place carpet runners with the pointy side facing up in front of anything you want to mark as off limits. Use a water bottle to squirt your cat if you catch them scratching somewhere off limits. While these measures do not look attractive, it is hopefully temporary as your cat establishes appropriate clawing behavior. Patience and persistence are required in order to train your cat to create new scratching patterns.

There are other options besides scratching posts and cat trees. First, there is a non-surgical alternative using Soft Paws. These are hollow "false nails" that fit like a cup over the claw and are glued in place. They stay on the nail for 4 to 6 weeks, and fall off as the nail grows. Replacement for most cat owners is a simple procedure. You can purchase a set of Soft Paws over the counter. We can glue on the first set of Soft Paws while you watch so you can see how we do it. After that we can continue to apply future sets of Soft Paws, or you can do it yourself at home.

Another option is a surgical procedure referred to simply as declawing. This is the traditional method that has been performed to prevent cats from using claws. Declawing is a drastic and permanent solution when all other options have been exhausted. During the procedure the surgeon amputates the claw and last bone in each toe, from which the nail actually grows. It is essential that this bone be removed with the claw. This ensures that all the nail-producing cells are removed, thereby preventing re-growth of the nail. Either a small dissolvable stitch or tissue adhesive is used to close the skin together at the end of each toe when the procedure is completed.

This procedure is performed under general anesthesia and multiple forms of pain medications (local, injectable, oral, and patches) are often used to reduce post operative pain. The apparent degree of pain experienced by a cat varies from case to case. Your cat will stay at the hospital 1 to 2 nights with its feet bandaged and pain level monitored.

Once your cat goes home it will likely need to continue on some form of pain medication as it is not uncommon for there to be discomfort. Your cat may experience pain for several days or even a week or more post operatively. During this time they will need to be confined in order to prevent trauma to the feet. Cats rely on their claws for defense and should remain indoors after the surgery. There are reports that some cats show an increase incidence of biting following the surgery (presumably due to lack of claws for defense) but this is not a consistent finding. Any of our veterinarians will be happy to answer questions you may have about this procedure.

Preparation for Your New Cat

1. Safe Room

A Safe Room doesn't have to be a separate room, but could be an empty closet, a corner of the bedroom partitioned off, or a seldom-used bathroom. It is important for your cat to have a place he can retreat and rest. This haven will help provide your cat with confidence which will aid him in his decision to socialize with his new family. It may take several days to a week or more, depending on his history, but patience at this point will lead to a happier relationship with your cat in the end. The following is a list of supplies to furnish the Safe Room:

A place to sleep: It doesn't have to be a fancy bed. A box lined with a soft blanket or towels can be very comfortable too. You can also put towels in the bottom of the cat carrier with the door left open so your cat can easily come and go. This makes a bed if he doesn't have his own room, and it will also help your new cat view his carrier as a friendly space.

A litter box: A clean litter box is an absolute must. Make sure to clean it regularly-daily or at least every other day.

Food and water bowls: Choose sturdy, tip-proof bowls. Be sure to separate the feeding station from the litter box, as cats do not like to eat near the bathroom!

A scratching post: One post will suffice. Once your cat is allowed into the rest of the house, multiple scratching posts are ideal.

Toys: Rolled-up wads of paper are great along with commercial-bought toys.

A chair: For when you visit with your cat.

2. Litter Box Set Up

From [Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine](#)

There are four basic things to consider when setting up a litter box:

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 and washed weekly with a mild detergent.

Litter Box Type and Size: Litter boxes are available in a variety of sizes and shapes. Cats generally prefer large, uncovered litter boxes. Uncovered litter boxes are more easily accessible to your cat. Larger boxes are better because they can provide more room for your cat to move around. As a rule the litter box should be large enough for your cat to stand up (on all fours) and turn around in.

Boxes with high sides or rims may be appropriate for cats that tend to scatter litter over the side while digging. Low sided boxes are appropriate for small kittens and older cats that have trouble getting in and out of the box.

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 prefer covered litter boxes because of the added privacy they provide. Remember that covered litter boxes will concentrate odors more than uncovered boxes. Your cat may refuse to use a covered box if it is not kept very clean.



Litter Substrate: Research has shown that most cats prefer fine-grained, unscented litters. Scoopable litters usually have finer grains than typical clay litter and have the added advantage of being easy to keep clean on a daily basis. Many cats are put off by the odor of scented or deodorant litter. This is also a good reason to not 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 once a day and washed once a week with a mild detergent.

Once you find a litter you cat likes, don't change types or brands or the cat may refuse to use the litter box. If you need to make a change the cat should be offered the new litter in a litter box placed next to the old litter box and litter. This allows

the cat to decide if she wants to use the new litter. Fill boxes with enough litter to permit the cat to scratch and bury waste (usually about 2 inches deep).

Litter Box Location and Number: Cats need quiet and privacy when using the litter box. Litter boxes should be placed away from appliances or air ducts that could suddenly come on and startle the cat. They should also 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. 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.

3. Cat Proof Your Home

- Get down on the floor at a cat's level. The real secret to cat proofing is to look at your home through the eyes of a cat. Find everything that looks like a toy, and if it's something harmful, get rid of it or make it safe.
- Bitter apple or lemon-scented sprays are great for marking areas you want to be off-limits. Cats dislike the taste and/or scent.
- Put away any breakable treasures that are remotely accessible to your cat. Remember that adult cats can, and will jump onto shelves and counters, so put yourself into the mind of the cat, and look around, and remove anything you value.
- Cats will climb furniture and drapes. Consider covering cloth furniture with a purchased cover, blanket, or bedspread. Drapes should be tied up and out of reach.
- Cats love to play with plants. Unfortunately, part of their play involves biting and tasting—eating some plants can be fatal, so get rid of those, or hang them safely out of reach. Artificial plants and flowers are an alternative, but make sure they don't have easily detachable (and ingestible) items such as berries and small twigs. *See packet insert for list of poisonous plants.*
- Cats love to play with cords from blinds, but they can get tangled up in them and suffocate. Either anchor the cords firmly or tie them up out of reach.

- Electric cords are tempting toys. Invest in a cord management system or tape the cords together and fasten them out of reach. Those that aren't managed easily can be sprayed with Bitter Apple. Do the same with long phone cords.
- Remove any ant, roach traps, rat poison, or snail bait from accessible areas.
- Rubber bands, paper clips, thumb tacks, broken balloons, Christmas tree tinsel, thread, yarn, string, and other small articles are irresistible play objects for cats. These are choking hazards and can be swallowed; causing an intestinal obstruction that requires emergency surgery and hospitalization.
- It's probably better to label the garage off-limits to your cat. Too many poisonous and hazardous materials are stored there. Anti-freeze is very poisonous and is attractive to animals because of its sweet taste. Clean up any spilled anti-freeze immediately. Store all caustic and poisonous materials in a closet cabinet.
- Keep the door to the dryer and washing machine closed and always check inside before starting them up.
- Keep cupboard and dresser drawers securely closed. A cat can accidentally be shut inside or get injured.

4. Shopping List

- Food
- Food and water bowls
- Toys
- Cat carrier
- Grooming tools
- Bed
- Scratching post
- Cat litter
- Litter box and scoop

Introducing Your Cat to a Resident Pet

The following is from: www.homevet.com

Cats

The best way to avoid conflict between cats is to carefully prepare for the first encounter. The resident cat may adjust to the newly introduced cat without confrontation if they are first required to share your home but at different times of the day, and are not immediately introduced. For the first few days, keep the new cat confined to one room. Provide fresh food, water, and litter daily. Make frequent visits to spend time playing, feeding, petting, and generally interacting with the new cat during its isolation. Give it time to adjust to this one location, where it is guaranteed emotional and physical security. This will also help you establish a positive relationship with your new pet without distraction.



Meanwhile, your resident cat will sense traces of the intruder on your clothing and skin. The new pet's odor and sounds will alert your resident cat to its presence. During this period, spend extra time with your resident cat, engaging in favorite activities in an effort to relieve any anxiety and minimize tension.

Feeding tends to relieve an animal's anxiety and may help it adjust to the household changes. Place your cat's food dish near the door to the room where the new cat is kept confined. Gradually move the confined cat's food dish closer to the inside of the door. Move to the next step when neither cat exhibits any growling, hissing or spitting when it senses the other is nearby.

Next, confine your resident cat, with its own food, water, and litter box to a favorite location. Your own bedroom may be convenient; most resident cats feel comfortable there because it is associated so strongly with you. Allow your new cat to explore your home for brief periods.

Accompany it on its patrol to extend the comfort of your presence beyond the room where it had been isolated.

Several times a day, allow the new pet out of confinement for longer and longer periods. When both cats appear comfortable (the new one will assume positions of rest, for example, or groom itself more than it actively explores your home), proceed to the next step.

Keep separate litter boxes for now. With continued progress, you may decide to gradually move one or both litter boxes to another location. It is advisable to maintain one litter box for each cat, even though each cat will likely use both boxes.

Arrange to be present when both cats roam freely throughout your home for the first time. This should be planned to coincide with regular mealtimes. Follow the new cat so that you will be present when they first see each other. Some hesitation and hissing are to be expected from either or both individuals. Feed the cats in each other's presence, placing their food dishes at a comfortable distance. Wait only a few minutes after they have eaten to confine the cats to their quarters until the next scheduled mealtime. If either or both cats seem so disturbed that they do not eat in the others presence, remove the food bowls and confine each to its own safe place.

Try again when both cats are calm. If a second attempt fails, remove their food and confine them again. Wait until each has regained its composure to feed it. Try again the next day. As things settle down, allow them to spend progressively longer periods together after they have each eaten a meal. Move their food dishes gradually closer to each other at successive meals. If problems occur at any time during the introduction process, return to the preceding step as outlined above.

Be patient. Some cats are less sociable towards others and less willing to share their territory. If the cats are consistently aggressive toward each other, it may be necessary to sedate one or both cats. Psychoactive medication should be prescribed by your veterinarian and used only if necessary and for a short time. Both cats are likely to experience some anxiety during the transition period, though one cat will likely react more strongly than the other. Unless there is a medical reason not to use medication or one cat seems completely unbothered by the other, both cats are likely to benefit from the medication.

Dogs

Proceed cautiously. As long as the dog is restrained on a leash and the cat is free to escape, rely on the dog's initial reaction to the cat. If your dog guards its food or other objects, retrain it or take preventive measures. A cat that approaches a dog guarding its food may risk injury. A common concern among dog owners is that a cat will scratch their dog's face and, in particular its eyes. A cat will rarely attack a dog without provocation unless it is cornered or threatened. Most dogs have a long muzzle and quick reflexes that adequately protect their eyes from cats. Any traumatic corneal laceration caused by a cat usually heals well with veterinary care.



Other Pets

Other pets may be introduced gradually if your cat seems to be confident and not too timid. You should keep your new cat enclosed in the crate or carrier while introducing the other pets. Do not leave the pets together unsupervised until they have had several weeks of SUPERVISED interaction. This is especially important with dogs, even friendly ones. A chase scene will make future interactions much more difficult.



Grooming Your Cat

Regular grooming is an important part of a cat's health. A shiny, beautiful coat is a sign of your cat's overall health and well-being. Cats tend to do a good job of keeping themselves clean, but they may need help when it comes to preventing matted hair and fur balls. If a cat is not used to being groomed, start with gentle combing in areas that your cat seems to enjoy and gradually work up to an all over brushing. It's important to start grooming your cat at a young age. Grooming also helps you monitor any changes in appearance that may be signs of illness, injury, or parasites.

Some things to check for as you groom your cat:

- Unusual lumps under the skins, rashes, bald spots, sores, cuts
- Unusually dull coat, flaky skin, fleas
- Red, inflamed, cloudy eyes or excessive tearing
- Tender or swollen ears and/or strong odor
- Bad breath, swollen gums, excessive tartar

Bathing

Cats do not usually need baths since they are self-groomers. If bathing is necessary, use only warm water and mild soap, preferably a shampoo specifically formulated for cats. Stay away from shampoos (especially flea shampoos) that are labeled for dogs only as these often contain chemicals that are toxic for cats. Rinse your cat thoroughly and dry it well with towels.

Brushing

A minimum of once a week is recommended for short hair cats but since being brushed is often an enjoyable experience for cats, daily brushing is the ideal. Longhair cats require more frequent grooming; usually two to three times a week or even everyday might be necessary. Brushing also helps reduce hairballs and excessive shedding. If your cat's hair is falling out, seems to be scratching excessively, or if you notice any signs of a rash make an appointment with one of our veterinarians.

Toe Nail Trimming

A pair of specifically designed clippers for cats should be used and are available at pet stores. Never use regular scissors as they can crush and injure your cat's claw. When clipping your cat's nails it is a good idea to use two people – one to hold your pet securely and the other to clip the nails. You are always welcome to schedule a technician appointment and have us show you how to properly trim your cat's nails.

- A. Support your cat securely in your left arm with his front paw in your left hand. It may be easier at first to wrap him in a towel with only the paw extended.
- B. Press gently but firmly on the pad area to extend a claw. It isn't necessary to squeeze hard. Examine the claw closely under light to find the pink area in the center called the "quick". This is a blood vessel, and will bleed if nicked.

- C. Holding the clippers parallel to the flat part of the claw, quickly snip off the tip, being careful not to cut into the quick.
- D. Give your cat a treat and a few kind words for being so good. The more relaxed you and he both are, the easier the process will be.
- E. Repeat the previous five steps until you have finished the first paw.

Eye Care

A cat's eyes should be clear and bright with no excessive tearing or mucus discharge. Use a moistened cotton ball to remove any discharge from around the eye area. Red, inflamed, or cloudy eyes or excessive tearing are indications of possible infection or eye injury. Because eyes are very delicate organs, any injury should receive prompt veterinary attention.

Ear Cleaning

Ears are a main collecting point of dirt and debris, so it is important to check your cat's ears a couple times a month. If your cat's ears need cleaning, use a cotton ball moistened with a commercial ear cleaner suggested by one of our veterinarians. You can also ask your vet or a technician to show you how to do it properly if you are unsure. Remember to be gentle. Never go deeper into the ear than what you can see. Consult your vet if you find deeply lodged earwax or redness and black spots.



Health & Wellness

The earlier a problem is detected, the easier it is to resolve. At the first signs of illness in your pet, see your veterinarian without delay.

Dental Care

By four weeks of age, kittens have their incisors, the 12 small teeth in the front of the mouth. At six weeks, all 26 deciduous teeth are in; their adult teeth come in between 11 to 30 weeks.

Cats, like humans, need dental care on a regular basis. Animal teeth cleanings are strongly recommended. Teaching your cat to accept the brushing of its teeth will take some training, but will be very beneficial once he is accustomed to the process. Daily brushing is most beneficial and will help to establish a routine for your pet. Brushing twice a week is acceptable if your schedule can't accommodate daily brushing.

For healthy teeth brush your cat's teeth at home with special toothpaste, starting at the earliest possible age. Use food and treats formulated to help prevent plaque buildup and remove tartar.

Problem: Tartar build-up

Results: Bad breath, irritation and possible infection of gums, eventual loss of teeth

Problem: Cavity or tooth fracture

Results: Displacement of other teeth, difficulty in chewing

How to avoid these problems: Clean your kitten's teeth two or three times a week. When a kitten gets adult teeth, brush them often with a special animal toothpaste and toothbrush. Don't use toothpaste made for humans, which can be toxic to cats. There are specially formulated treats available that can help keep a cat's teeth clean.

Food & Water

Kittens should only be fed food specially formulated for kittens so they can get all of their nutritional needs. Kittens grow rapidly and spend a lot of energy so they have different daily requirements than an adult cat. It is recommended that kittens be fed two to three times a day during this period of rapid growth, and many owners make food available at all times along with a source of fresh, clean water. You can moisten dry food with warm water to help soften the food and make it easier to eat. Any diet changes should be made gradually over a seven to ten day period to avoid digestive upsets. From six months to one year, feed your cat twice a day if they are eating canned and/or moistened dry food. Dry food can be fed freely, just make sure to fill the bowl with a set quantity of food once each day. Overfeeding should be avoided. Obesity in cats can cause a myriad of medical problems including diabetes. Your cat should *always* have constant and easy access to fresh, clean water.

Exercise & Playtime

An active cat is usually a healthy cat. Regular playtime with your cat is a way to provide exercise. This is especially important for indoor-only cats! It has been suggested that exercise/playtime is also a good solution for behavior problems. Cat trees and cat jungle gyms provide your kitty with something to race up and down without destroying your furniture. Many cats enjoy being chased around the house for a fun game. There are many toys on the market as well that promote cat exercise. If you have a multi-level house encourage your cat to use the stairs by placing food dishes, cat trees/scratching posts, and beds on different floors.

Playtime is fun for both you and your kitty! Not only is it a bonding experience it also helps your cat stay active and healthy. Interactive toys, such as laser pointers (avoid pointing in the eyes), feather wands, stuffed catnip mice, Woolly Bullies made of real wool, and old socks stuffed with catnip are popular choices.

Make sure to keep playtime safe; do not leave toys out that your cat can choke on or swallow like string, rubber bands, or small detachable parts. String, yarn, thread, ribbons, and the like can become trapped in your cat's intestines causing severe damage and surgery.

Other playtime elements include:

- Building or purchasing a "cat tree" for climbing and watching the world. Cat trees provide fun and a lot of climbing exercise. They can compensate for a small apartment by providing vertical space. Ideally these can be placed near a window for a great view.
- Provide lots of toys- both interactive (such as feather wands or cat charmers) and toys your cat can play with safely on their own, such as catnip mice and balls. Rotate the toys you use since cats sometimes get bored. When this happens, hide the old toy and rotate in a new one to keep things interesting.
- Bird feeders can be placed in an area outside a window, to serve as a "kitty TV". Be sure the screen and window are very secure to prevent your cat from falling though! Fish tanks with sturdy covers can also provide entertainment.



Training & Behavior

The beginning of your cat's life with you is very important in terms of socializing and training. The first few weeks after taking your cat home should be filled with lots of holding, cuddling, gentle petting, brushing, etc. Talking to your cat in calm, soothing tones is important as well. Try to have your cat exposed to and handled by as many people as possible. Help accustom your cat to being on their back with gentle handling. Always make sure that this takes place in a safe environment, thus the necessity of a Safety Room. Security equals confidence which allows your cat to blossom into a friendly, loving, healthy pet. During this time introduce your cat to being brushed and groomed. Gently play with paws on a regular basis so that trimming their toe nails in the future doesn't turn in to a horrible ordeal. Reward positive behavior with treats, hugs, and words of encouragement. Socialization, combined with training will help encourage and develop positive behavior in your cat.



Interpreting Feline Body Language

The following information is from www.cat-behavior-explained.com

Cats talk with their bodies all the time - some cats much more so than with their voices. You've probably noticed certain kinds of cat behavior that your Kitty often displays - maybe twitching his tail, stretching out on his back, slowly blinking at you... Do these all mean something?

Definitely! This page goes through common body language behaviors that cats display, and tells you what they usually mean.

Tail

- **Swishing:** A swishing tail (i.e. the whole tail slowly and gently moving from side to side) usually means Kitty is alert, curious and interested in his environment.
- **Lashing:** A lashing tail (i.e. the whole tail moving from side to side in a fast, aggressive way) means Kitty is agitated and annoyed. Sometimes when Kitty is doing this he'll adopt a generally aggressive stance (more on this below.) The hair on his tail may also stand on end, giving it a bushy appearance. If he's doing this, leave him alone or you're likely to become the victim of an attack.
- **Twitching:** If Kitty is twitching his tail at the tip, this usually indicates he's interested in something he's seen. However, it may also be the first sign of aggression - e.g. if another cat has just invaded his patch - and in this case it could turn to a lashing tail and aggression.
- **Quivering:** Cats will quiver their tails at the base as part of cat spraying behavior. However, they may also do this when they rub up against you, or when you stroke their backs, especially near their tail, when they're standing up. In this instance, the quivering is a sign of great affection for you.
- **Tail bolt upright:** With some cats, if their tail is upright (i.e. pointing towards the sky) when they're walking, it means they're happy and confident. The rest of their body language (e.g. the way they walk, the way they look around) will also reflect this.
- **Tail half tucked between legs:** This usually means the cat is scared, unhappy or feeling threatened. The rest of his body language will confirm this (e.g. head down, ears back, body low to the ground.)

Ears

- **Pricked up ears:** This is a sign of Kitty being interested in what he can hear around him. You may have noticed cats can also turn their pricked up ears round so they can listen to what's going on behind them without moving their heads...
- **Ears turned back:** If Kitty's ears are flattened towards his head and turned back, this usually means he's being threatened and is turning his ears away to protect them.

Head & Whiskers

- **Raised head:** The meaning of this varies depending on the circumstances. If Kitty is happy, a raised head indicates curiosity and confidence, and is usually associated with pricked up ears.
- **Lowered head:** In a stand-off with another cat, a lowered head indicates submissiveness. In other circumstances, it can just indicate sleepiness, contentment or boredom.
- **Cat whiskers:** Whiskers can act as a measure of a cat's mood. If his whiskers are in a forward position, he's relaxed, happy or curious. If they're pulled back, he's defensive or aggressive.

Eyes

- **Wide, staring eyes:** This is usually seen before and during a cat fight, or before a cat attacks another animal or a human. They stare to try to scare the other cat / animal / human away.
- **Narrow, slowly blinking eyes:** This means the opposite of above - the cat is saying he's happy with the other cat/animal/human and that he trusts them.

If you've ever wondered why cats make a beeline for the one person in the room who doesn't like cats, eyes are the reason. The cat lovers in the room will stare at Kitty, which will make him feel threatened, so he'll want to stay away from them. The person who doesn't like cats won't look at him because she's sincerely hoping he won't go anywhere near her. He sees her as the only non-threatening person in the room, so guess who he heads towards?!

Body

- **Why do cats knead?** This is a sign of affection, comfort and contentment.
- **Rubbing against your legs:** When Kitty does this, he's leaving his scent on you, effectively marking you as "his territory." It's a sign of affection.
- **Rolling onto his back and exposing his tummy:** Kitty is being submissive. He's paying you a compliment, saying he likes and trusts you.
- **Bent/straight legs:** If all of your kitty's legs are straight and he has an upright posture, raised head and pricked ears, he's happy, curious and confident. In a stand-off, bent front legs and stretched back legs show that Kitty would rather avoid a fight, but that he will defend himself if he has to.
- **Arched back:** In kittens, this is usually a playful stance – they want to play fight. In adult cats, however, it usually indicates that Kitty is preparing for a real fight. Accompanying signals may be ears turned back, wide eyes and hair on the back and tail standing on end.

When you're trying to interpret cat body language, it's important to look at your cat's whole body, not just one particular part.

Poisoning and First Aid

Illness due to poisoning is a serious concern for pets. Some poisons are clearly labeled, such as anti-freeze and household cleaners. Other toxins are less evident: Chocolate, alcohol, avocados, coffee, grapes, raisins, and walnuts. If you feel your cat has been in contact with, ingested or inhaled a toxic substance, call your veterinarian immediately. For safety's sake, post our number (925-866-8387) and the Animal Poison Control Center (which provides guidance on poisoning issues for a fee) in a prominent location:

Animal Poison Control Center: 888-426-4435

First Aid Kit

A health emergency can strike anytime, so be prepared with a pet first aid kit. The following items should be included:

<i>Rubbing alcohol</i>	<i>Thermometer</i>	<i>Gauze roll and pads</i>
<i>Triple antibiotic ointment</i>	<i>Blanket</i>	<i>Vet wrap</i>
<i>Styptic powder</i>	<i>Towel</i>	<i>Cotton swabs</i>
<i>Syringe</i>	<i>Muzzle</i>	<i>Sterile pads</i>
<i>Scissors</i>	<i>Collar</i>	<i>Adhesive tape</i>
<i>Clippers</i>	<i>Saline</i>	<i>Betadine</i>
<i>Latex gloves</i>	<i>Phone numbers (vet, ER)</i>	<i>Cold packs</i>
<i>Splint</i>	<i>Pet's medical records</i>	<i>Hot packs</i>
<i>Medicine dropper</i>	<i>Pet first aid book</i>	<i>Hydrogen peroxide</i>

React Fast, Seek Help

Hopefully you don't have to put your first aid kit to use. Just in case you do, it's good to have pet first aid skills so you can administer care until your pet can receive veterinary attention. Consider enrolling in a pet first aid course offered through the American Red Cross (www.rdcross.org/redcrosspets).

Your best weapon in protecting your pet's good health is observation. Watch for changes in your pet's eating habits, activity level, sleep habits, etc. Other, less obvious indicators include your pet's heart and respiratory rates, potty schedule, and gum color (capillary refill time -CRT). To determine CRT, lightly press on your pet's gum line until there is no color under your finger and measure how long it takes for blood to refill that space. Normal, healthy pets should have a CRT of one to two seconds.

Other indicators are obvious: vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, blood in urine or stool, coughing, etc. Of course, most pets will experience some of these symptoms from time to time, but if they exhibit one or more of these symptoms for more than 24 hours or are visibly uncomfortable, call the vet. If you ever are concerned about your pet's well being, *please call* - that is why we are here!

Emergencies

In the event of an emergency it is best to try to stay calm and get your cat to the vet as fast as possible. If possible call first and alert the vet of the situation. Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center & Urgent Care is open 7am-10pm Monday through Friday and 8am-8pm on Saturday and Sunday in order to help your pets in their time of need.

What kinds of emergencies might occur?

There are many possible medical emergencies that your pet may experience ranging from being struck by an automobile to acute internal problems such as an intestinal blockage. The following are some of the most common and serious conditions seen in veterinary hospitals that require immediate attention:

- Any severe difficulty in breathing or gasping for breath
- Cardiac failure
- Massive bleeding
- Profound shock from any cause
- Anaphylaxis (severe allergic reactions)
- Penetrating wounds of the thorax (chest) or abdomen
- Coma and loss of consciousness
- Poisoning
- Massive injuries to the body
- Seizures
- Burns and scalds
- Heat stroke
- Bites and fight wounds
- Continuous vomiting and/or diarrhea

What can I do while awaiting veterinary help?

- Keep calm. This is important for both you and your pet.
- Contact your veterinary hospital, inform them of the situation and get first aid advice.
- Keep your cat warm, as quiet as possible, and keep movement to a minimum, especially if there is possible trauma, broken limbs, or any neurological symptoms.

Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center & Urgent Care New Cat Handbook

- Obtain a suitable container such as a cat carrier or a strong cardboard box. Drop a blanket or thick towel over the patient. Tuck it in carefully or maneuver your cat onto the blanket so it can be gently placed in the cardboard box or directly into your car. It is always best to bring your cat in a carrier in order to prevent escape. If this is not possible, you can wrap your cat in a heavy towel or blanket to keep him warm and restrict his movements. Assistance is always helpful.

Get to a veterinary hospital as soon as possible, but drive carefully!

Important Phone Numbers

Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center & Urgent Care: 925-866-8387

www.webvets.com

Monday through Friday: 6:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday: 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

VEG: Veterinary Emergency Group, San Ramon - Open 24/7

(925) 718-7771

2431 San Ramon Valley Blvd

San Ramon, CA 94583

SAGE: Contra Costa County Veterinary Emergency Clinic: 925-798-2900

www.ccvec.com

1410 Monument Blvd., Suite 108

Concord, CA 94520

National Animal Poison Control: 1-888-426-4436

www.aspca.org/pet-care/poison-control/

Contra Costa County Animal Control: 925-335-8300

www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/index.aspx?nid=59

Search for lost pets online!

4800 Imhoff Place, Martinez, CA 94553

Tuesday through Saturday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Lindsay Wildlife Museum: 925-935-1978

www.wildlife-museum.org/

931 First Avenue

Walnut Creek, CA 9459



Online References

www.webvets.com

www.homevet.com

www.catvets.com

www.stanford.edu/group/CATNET

www.cats.about.com/cs/kittencare/a/kitcareone.htm

www.1stchoice.ca/en/fiches/fiches.asp

www.animaltrustees.org

www.humanesociety.org

www.catcaresociety.org

www.cfa.org

www.perfectpaws.com

www.indoorpet.osu.edu

www.cat-behavior-explained.com

Other Online Resources

www.aspca.org

www.aahanet.org

www.embracepetinsurance.com

www.petsbest.com

www.avma.org

www.catsinternational.org

www.fanciers.com

www.eastbayspca.org

www.thepetprofessor.com

www.softpaws.com



Book Recommendations

From the Cat's Point of View

By Gwen Bohnenkamp

Robert Eames and John Simon (1991)

Cat Vs. Cat: Keeping Peace When You Have More Than One Cat

By Pam Johnson-Bennett

Penguin (Non-Classics) (2004)

Starting from Scratch: How to Correct Behavior Problems in Your Adult Cat

By Pam Johnson-Bennett

Penguin (Non-Classics) (2007)

Think Like a Cat: How to Raise a Well-Adjusted Cat--Not a Sour Puss

By Pam Johnson-Bennett

Penguin (Non-Classics); Rev Exp Up edition (2011)

Cat Training in 10 Minutes

By Miriam Fields-Babineau

Tfh Pubns Inc (2003)

The Cat Bible: Everything Your Cat Expects You to Know

By Tracie Hotchner

Gotham; 1 edition (2007)

The Cat Behavior Answer Book: Practical Insights & Proven Solutions for Your Feline Questions

By Arden Moore

Storey Publishing (2007)

House Cat: How to Keep Your Indoor Cat Sane and Sound

By Christine Church

Howell Book House; Revised edition (2005)

The Complete Cat's Meow: Everything You Need to Know about Caring for Your Cat

By Darlene Arden

Howell Book House; 1 edition (2011)

What Is My Cat Thinking?: The Essential Guide to Understanding Pet Behavior

By Gwen Bailey

Thunder Bay Press; Later Printing edition (2002)

ASPCA Complete Guide to Cats: Everything You Need to Know About Choosing and Caring for Your Pet

By James Richards

Chronicle Books (1999)

Complete Kitten Care

By Amy Shojai

Who Dares Wins (2010)

50 Games to Play With Your Cat

By Jackie Strachan Tfh Pubns Inc; 1 edition (2007)

