

# FELINE VACCINE RECOMMENDATIONS

## Guidelines

Vaccinations have saved the lives of millions of cats. Before the days of effective vaccines, cats routinely died from panleukopenia and complications of upper respiratory infections. Newer vaccines are available to protect against feline leukemia virus infection, feline infectious peritonitis virus and other infections. Current vaccination programs also protect our cats from the threat of rabies.

Traditional vaccines are administered by injection under the skin, but newer vaccines can be administered through the nostrils or intradermally and have been developed to protect against a variety of infections. An intradermal vaccine for feline leukemia has been developed to reduce the occurrence of vaccine-associated sarcomas. Despite the well-known benefits of vaccination, the practice of annual vaccination of mature cats is controversial. Some veterinarians believe that annual revaccination is an important and critical part of preventative health care. Others suggest that there is little scientific information to suggest that annual revaccination of older cats is necessary for some diseases because immunity to many viruses probably persists for the life of the animal.

The major concern about repeated vaccinations in cats is the issue of feline vaccine-associated sarcoma, a cancer that develops in approximately 1 of every 1,000 cats to as few as 1 in every 10,000 cats, near the site of injection. However, Routine vaccinations are crucial for kittens. To protect kittens, vaccines are given every 3 to 4 weeks until they are about 4 months old; then, vaccines are repeated every 1 or 3 years, depending on license requirements. Kittens usually receive upper respiratory (FVRCP), feline leukemia (FeLV), and rabies vaccinations.

Vaccinations should begin between 6 to 8 weeks of age and continue every 3 to 4 weeks until the kitten is 16 weeks old. Feline leukemia is generally given during the "kitten series" to all kittens, and yearly for outdoor cats.

Common symptoms your pet may experience:

Mild fever

Decrease in social behavior

Diminished appetite or activity

Sneezing or other respiratory signs with intranasal vaccines

Discomfort or mild swelling at injection site

Rare side effects, such as allergic reaction may occur. Your pet may experience symptoms of a more serious reaction to the vaccine within minutes or hours of vaccination.

Rare symptoms could include:

Swelling to face and head

Repeated vomiting and diarrhea

Whole body itching

Difficulty breathing

Collapse

If your pet experiences any of these rare symptoms, you should contact your veterinarian immediately, as your pet may require additional medical treatment.

Courtesy of Boehringer Ingelheim

## PARASITE CONTROL IN CATS

Fleas, ticks, heartworms and intestinal worms are the primary parasite we as pet owners battle over with our pets. They drive your cat crazy and pose a health risk to other pets and people.

### Intestinal Parasites

Cats are victims of a variety of intestinal worms such as: coccidia, roundworms, hookworms, giardia, and tapeworms. Each can cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and anemia. A simple fecal exam can rule out intestinal parasite infection.

### Fleas

Fleas are a common enemy of cats, dogs, and people. Not only are the bites bothersome, but animals may be allergic to the fleas; the most minute infestation can lead to severe dermatitis. Putting your cat on a flea prevention, or better yet a heartworm/flea/intestinal parasite protection product is beneficial.

### Ticks

Ticks are usually found in thick wooded areas and will latch on to an animal when in need of a blood meal. Ticks are sources of a variety of illnesses, so it is imperative that you check your cats that go outdoors for ticks.

### Heartworms

Heartworms aren't just for dogs; cats can become infected just as well. A mosquito, carrying a heartworm larvae can bite a cat and the larvae will develop into a full-fledged adult worm, finding home in the arteries of the lungs and the heart of the cat. Without treatment, heartworm disease can cause lethargy, loss of appetite, cardiac problems, respiratory distress and even death.

Intestinal parasites can be prevented by putting your cat on a heartworm prevention plan, as discussed with a veterinarian. By putting your cat on a heartworm prevention, not only are they protected against heartworm disease, they are also prevented from being infected with many types of intestinal worms. Most heartworm preventions aimed towards cats are combined with a flea prevention. There are other products that are primarily flea preventions and flea/tick combination prevention products. Consult your veterinarian for the right choice for you and your cat.

## FELINE HEARTWORM DISEASE

Cats are at equal risk of contracting heartworm disease as dogs. Indoor and Outdoor cats are at equal risk, despite the myths you may have heard. Heartworm infections occur when an infected mosquito bites a cat. Once infected, these worms develop in the tissues and are carried to the heart and lungs. Symptoms include but are not limited to coughing, anorexia, collapse, lethargy, vomiting and sudden death. Cats may show respiratory signs as result of an inflammatory response upon arrival and death of heartworms known as Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease. This response may sometimes be mistaken for asthma.

Testing is available for feline heartworm disease, and cats should be tested regularly as it often goes untreated. The test for feline heartworm disease is usually available as a combination test with feline leukemia and feline immunodeficiency virus. There is no treatment for heartworm disease in cats, like dogs, but they can be treated symptomatically. Prevention is vital to keep cats protected against this disease. There are many varieties of once a month preventatives available from your veterinarian. Many of these preventatives protect cats against intestinal parasites and include flea control.

## Heartworm and Flea Preventatives at Dutch Fork Animal Hospital

Heartworms are transmitted through mosquitoes that have bitten an infected dog. They can then bite a cat and transmit the heartworm to the unsuspecting feline. Dogs and cats have been diagnosed with heartworm disease in all 50 states. Cats have a lower prevalence of adult worms, but the microfilaria (immature heartworms) that circulate in the bloodstream can cause serious health concerns. Indoor cats are at equal risk as outdoor cats; nearly 30% of cats that tested positive for heartworms in a North Carolina study were indoors only. There is no treatment for Feline Heartworm Disease; it can only be prevented by the use of a monthly heartworm preventative.

Intestinal parasites are also a concern for pet owners as many can infect people. Heartworm preventatives include medication to prevent infection of the most significant intestinal parasites. Intestinal parasites are a common problem with cats; nearly 45% of all cats have some sort of parasitism. Roundworms are the most common parasite affecting cats (nearly 25-75%\*; higher in kittens). Hookworms are less common, but still prevalent (affecting 10-60%\*; higher in kittens.) Whipworms are uncommon, but the risk is still there if your cat is not protected. Prevention is not costly and if left untreated, these intestinal parasites can lead to severe health issues including anemia, vomiting, diarrhea, and dehydration. These symptoms could make your cat more susceptible to infection and could possibly lead to death.

With such staggering figures, we at Dutch Fork Animal Hospital and The American Heartworm Society and Companion Animal Parasite Council recommend year round administration of heartworm preventative products.

Statistics taken from Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine.

It is our goal to offer the best preventatives available to our patients.  
At Dutch Fork Animal Hospital our primary recommendations are:

### Feline: Revolution

Revolution offers superior heartworm, intestinal parasite, flea, and tick prevention as compared to other products on the market. Because it is a topical it offers easier administration to our finicky felines and is a combined preventative so only one product need be given.

\*For clients with a major infestation of adult fleas we recommend temporarily using an adulticide such as Capstar.

If you have ANY questions please feel free to discuss these products with our staff and doctors.

## HOW TO KITTEN PROOF YOUR HOME

Cats are very curious and often find themselves getting into mischief. Think of your kitten as a small child; we child proof homes by keeping dangerous objects out of a child's hands; do the same for your kitten.

### Household hazards

Furniture – Reclining chairs can trap a cat, so check underneath before returning it to an upright position. Rocking chairs can roll on a cat's tail or foot; make sure they are not sitting near the rocker when you take a break.

Ironing boards – Irons left standing can topple over and injure your cat. Do not leave hot irons unattended.

Clothes dryer – Cats love to snuggle in warm places and may decide to sneak into the dryer. Check the machine before turning it on. Close the door when you are finished with a load of laundry.

Electrical cords – keep all electrical cords away from your cat because of the risk of electrocution.

Small objects – small objects such as beads, rubber bands, coins, pins, screws are easily ingested and can cause great internal harm.

Windows – Keep windows shut or have a screen placed so your cat will not be able to jump out of the window or fall from one.

Toilets – a small kitten could fall in and drown. Cats can also be poisoned if the toilet contains automatic cleaner. Keep the lid down!

### Potential poisons

Plants – ex: lily of the valley, daffodils, rhododendron, sago palm, and hydrangea.

Chemicals – cleaning products are a huge risk, make sure they are stored where your cat can not get to them.

Ovens – when cleaning the oven, keep the door closed so the cat doesn't walk in the oven; after cooking keep it shut so she doesn't burn her feet.

Antifreeze – this product is often ingested because of its sweet taste; but it is extremely poisonous.

Drugs – common anti-inflammatory drugs (aspirin, ibuprofen) as well as analgesics (acetaminophen) can be lethal to cats; keep your medicine out of reach and do not let them play with the medicine. If medicine falls on the floor, pick it up and throw it away.

## LITTER BOX TRAINING

Litter boxes are a necessity for a cat owner. There are a hundred varieties, shapes, colors, sizes, and models. You should always have one more litter box than you have cats. If you have a two story home, make sure both floors have an accessible litter box.

The box should be roomy enough so that the cat can comfortably turn around in; small litter boxes are convenient because they are not as unsightly, but cats will often not use them because they are too small. Pick a box that matches the size of the cat. If you have a kitten, get a box proportionate to her and upgrade to a bigger one when she grows up. Some boxes come with lids, or covers. If you have a covered box, make sure it is easy to get in and out of. Remember, however, that some cats may feel vulnerable if they are kept closed in. Some cats may not favor covered boxes.

Do not put the litter box near where the cat eats or sleeps. You do not want to sleep next to your toilet and neither does she. If the box is placed too closely to the food bowl, she may choose to eliminate elsewhere. Place the box in a low traffic area, preferably in a corner; a good spot is the bathroom. Try to avoid areas that are cluttered. With two cats, place the boxes far away from each other so that territorial issues don't come into play.

The next question is which litter to use. There are clays, crystals, newspaper, wood chips, corn and many more to choose from. Some commercial litter brands hawk on the way their litter smells; a litter that is odorless is preferable. If it is scented, do not buy one that has a citrus smell; cats do not like the smell and will choose to eliminate elsewhere. Many cats like clumping litter because it's not as messy. Many clay litters can be dusty and do not clump. If your cat doesn't like the litter, try another one. Get a litter that she is comfortable using, which may or may not be the brand on sale. Cats are very particular and little changes lead to unwelcome modifications in bathroom habits.

Clean the litter box daily. Cats prefer a clean toilet and may often times eliminate in inappropriate locations if their litter box is dirty. When you change the litter, clean the box with warm, soapy water and replenish with fresh litter; this can be done every month or so.

## DECLAWING

Declawing (onychectomy) is an elective surgical procedure in which the nail and last bone are removed from all the toes of a cat's front feet, and occasionally the rear feet as well. It is performed to make your cat unable to scratch furniture, people or other animals. Because cats seldom use their rear claws to scratch furniture it is generally recommended that only the front claws be removed. Additionally, cats that have only their front claws removed can still climb trees and claw with their rear limbs to protect themselves.

Alternatives to declawing include: behavior modification, regular nail clipping to keep the nails blunt or glued on vinyl nail caps.

Anesthesia is typically required for this surgery, so it is recommended that pre-operative bloodwork is ran to ensure that the cat is healthy enough for surgery. There are several methods for performing the procedure, but the goal is the same: complete removal of the third phalanx (last bone in the toe) and the nail that grows on it. Bleeding may occur from the incision after surgery, thus the feet are often bandaged for one to two days following the procedure. Your cat may stay overnight at the clinic the day of surgery for observation. Postoperative pain is anticipated and patients are treated with pain killers.

Lameness or limping may persist for several weeks after surgery. Re-growth of the nail indicates the nail bed was incompletely removed during surgery and your cat will need to have a repeat surgery performed to remove the residual nail bed and claw. It is recommended that your cat not be allowed outside after this procedure because he will be less able to defend himself from other animals. Shredded paper is usually used in the litter

box for two weeks after surgery to prevent litter from getting into the incisions. Yesterday's News is a brand of cat litter that can also be used.

#### Declawing facts

Many cats recovering from this surgery suffer from pain as they wake up. Post operative pain medication will relieve most if not all discomfort. In most cases the pain appears to subside after 24 to 36 hours. However, during that time your cat will be gingerly walking around the place as if his paws are extremely tender—and they probably are. In other instances the pain lasts considerably longer, especially if there are surgical complications. Adversely, some cats may hobble around for years later, though the majority eventually returns to normal. Your cat might find the litter painful on his tender paws. Vets often recommend putting torn up newspaper in the box to prevent litter particles from adhering to the wounds. Also, aggressive cats may be more likely to bite instead of swat with their paws once they have been declawed.

#### Alternatives to declawing

\*There are many ways to avoid declawing. You can trim the cat's nails, get nail covers or invest in scratching posts.\*

Keep one extra scratching post in the household. Each post should be tall enough for your cat to stretch up to its full height with out being able to reach the top and should be steady. Use a material that will shred; burlap is a favorite. Choose an attractive location for the post. Position them in obvious places first, near scratching sites that your cat has already selected, and then gradually reposition to less obvious places later.

Several years ago, "soft paws" were invented. They are plastic nail caps that can be super glued to a cat's claws following a nail trim. The results are often spectacular. The manufacturer recommends changing the caps every 4 to 6 weeks.

Nail trims will also keep your furniture from becoming a target for your cat's shredding. It is sufficient to remove the sharp points so that the nail ends are squared but take care not to cut into the "quick". Ask your veterinarian to teach you how and to recommend some good nail clippers.

## EMERGENCIES AND FIRST AID

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.

For specific aid refer to the information below.

Obtain a suitable container such as a strong cardboard box. Drop a blanket or thick towel over the patient. Tuck it in carefully or maneuver the cat onto the blanket so it can be gently placed in the cardboard box or directly into your car.

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

Emergency Situation — Action

Automobile injury — Make sure your cat has a clear airway, but do not put your hand in its mouth if your cat is conscious. Cover wounds with whatever suitable material is available. Handle your cat with care, supporting its body as much as possible. Carry it in a basket, box, or cage to the veterinary hospital.

**Bleeding (hemorrhage)** — If hemorrhage is severe on a limb, apply a tourniquet above the wound just tight enough to significantly reduce flow of blood. Be sure to loosen it every twenty minutes. Apply a pad of cotton or wool over a gauze dressing to the wound or bleeding point and bandage it firmly and apply direct pressure while you seek veterinary care.

**Seizures** — Prevent your cat from injuring itself. Do not put your hand in its mouth. Keep your cat as quiet as possible and prevent it from falling. Do not attempt to interrupt the seizure. Most seizures last less than two to three minutes. If the seizure lasts longer than five minutes, you may need to transfer your pet during this state. Once your cat has recovered from the seizure, keep it calm and warm and comfort your cat by talking gently to it while petting. It is important to time the seizure so you can tell your veterinarian how long it lasted. Contact your veterinarian immediately.

**Burns** — Cool the burned area with cool water by running water over the burn or cover it with wet towels. This also helps remove caustic substances (acid or alkaline) if these are the cause. If loss of skin occurs, cover the area with the cleanest material available.

**Heat stroke** — Place your cat in a tub of cool water. When you are ready to transport your cat to the veterinary hospital, wrap it in a cool, wet towel.

**Hemorrhagic gastroenteritis (diarrhea with blood, with or without vomiting)** — Seek veterinary attention. This is a serious condition, especially in cats.

**Bites and fight wounds** — Clean the wounds immediately with warm water and seek veterinary attention.

**Poisons** — If your pet ingests, or you suspect they have ingested a poison, contact your veterinarian or pet poison control immediately for guidance. Do not attempt to induce vomiting at home. There is nothing safe to give at home to induce vomiting in cats. If corrosive or toxic material is on the skin, rinse for fifteen minutes. Bring a sample of the suspected poison with its container to the veterinary hospital.

**Eye injury** — If the cornea is penetrated or perforated it will be very painful. Prevent your cat from scratching at its eye causing further damage. If the eyeball is out of its socket, keep it moist with saline solution and protect it from direct injury. Seek veterinary help immediately. Eye injuries equal emergency.

**Shock (see below)** — Keep your cat warm and quiet. Seek immediate veterinary help.

What is shock?

Shock has many definitions. It is a complex systemic or whole body reaction to a number of situations. These include acute loss of blood volume such as hemorrhage, heart failure and other causes of decreased circulation (e.g. severe and sudden allergic reaction and heat stroke). If not treated quickly and effectively, systemic shock may cause irreversible injury to body cells, and it can be rapidly fatal.

How do I recognize shock?

Signs include rapid breathing which may be noisy, rapid heart rate with a weak pulse, pale (possibly even white) mucous membranes (gums, lips, under eyelids), severe depression (listlessness) and cool extremities (limbs and ears). The cat may vomit.



Remember to remain calm and be wary around injured animals as they are more likely to respond with aggression.

Your poison control number:  
1-888-426-4435

Directions to the Carolina Wildlife Care – (803) 772-3994

Take I-26 west. Take the Piney Grove Road exit and turn left. This road dead ends at St. Andrews Rd. Turn right on St. Andrews and immediately turn left onto Old bush River Road. About 3 miles down, Carolina Wildlife is on the left.

Directions to South Carolina Emergency Center – (803) 798-3837

Take I-26 west, exit Piney Grove Road (exit 104). Turn right from the off ramp and go to your first stoplight. This stoplight is Fernandina Road. The Emergency center is on your left.

## Pet Insurance

Pet insurance works well in cases of injury and illness. Pet insurance premiums are typically paid on a monthly basis and can be used to offset some of your pet's treatment costs.

When using pet insurance, payment is typically due when services are rendered and then your insurance company will reimburse you if applicable.

If you're looking for a pet insurance provider, we suggest checking out Pawlicy Advisor at [pawlicy.com](http://pawlicy.com). There is a link on our website under Insurance & Payments. This is a tool that will help you compare plans to find what works best for you.

## Socialization Scavenger Hunt!

Having a new kitten is a big responsibility! One of the first and biggest challenges you will face as the proud owner of a new kitten is to socialize it properly so that he or she will have the best chance at becoming a well-adjusted and friendly adult cat. The experiences your kitten has during the first four months of life will dramatically influence their adult personality. So making sure they have frequent positive experiences with every new person, animal, and situation they come upon is very important! Kittens that are insufficiently socialized during this time can potentially develop irreversible fears, timidity, and aggression.

To help you on your quest, we have developed a 'scavenger hunt' for you! Your goal is to check off all the items on the list within the next few months, and perhaps even add a few of your own. Remember, if your kitten has not completed its full set of vaccinations, please use caution when taking your kitten anywhere other cats may be or have been. Keeping your kitten safe and healthy is most important!

#### Mission #1: Meet New People

Guidelines: Encourage new people to approach your new kitten calmly and offer lots of affection. Have everyone in the household get some time with her; the more interaction with people the kitten has the more friendly they are likely to be as adults.

#### Mission #2: Go New Places and Experience New Things

Guidelines: Exposing your new kitten to new experiences is important so that they are not as nervous as they grow-up. One of the first experiences to get your kitten acclimated with is her carrier. Have the carrier around her with the door open and offer treats. Many times cats dislike their carriers because they associate the carrier with being shoved in it; if they associate it with a good experience, they will be more likely to accept it. Getting your kitten used to the car is beneficial for vet visits. Take short, frequent visits to the vet and offer her plenty of treats and affection. While at the vet, you can sit in the waiting room with out having to make an appointment. The more exposure the better! When you kitten familiarizes herself with these new experiences, she will be much less anxious later in life.

## BOARDING YOUR PETS

Did you know that Dutch Fork Animal Hospital provides boarding for your beloved pets? We have separate areas for dogs and cats, and we even offer luxury runs for the most pampered members of your family. All dogs that are kept with us are walked at least three times a day in a fenced grassy area. They are walked individually and are always supervised. We provide science diet maintenance and prescription food for your pets at no additional charge, but feel free to bring your own food if your pet requires a special diet. We will gladly administer any medications your pet may require, but we do ask that you supply the medications. Our veterinarians are available to take care of any health problems that may arise.

All of our boarding patients are required to be up to date on all of their vaccines. This ensures the safety of all the pets staying with us. Dogs are required to be current of DHLPP, Rabies, Bordetella (kennel cough), and Canine Influenza. We require Bordetella to be given every 6 months. Cats are required to have a negative Feline Leukemia/FIV test and must be current on their FVRCP and Rabies vaccinations. If your pet is in need of any of these vaccines, we will be happy to update them during their stay with us.

Our luxury boarding area offers spacious rooms for the special dogs in your life. They are located in a quieter section of the hospital, offer cable TV, beds, raised feeders, and a scenic view on one wall of the room.

In our regular boarding section of the hospital, we have several sized runs to choose from. Our highly trained kennel staff is constantly with all of our boarders, and can determine which size is best suited for your pet. You don't have to worry about bringing any bedding for your pet. We have cots and lots of blankets for your dog to have a comfy place to rest, ensuring that your items are not lost or damaged. We also offer large family runs for those families with more than one dog who wish to stay together. For an additional fee, we will happily bathe your dog prior to departure. The bath includes shampoo, blow dry, brush out, nail trim, anal gland expression, and cleaning of the ears.

Cats have their own special room which is away from the dog section. There are cat condos available for families who would like to board more than one cat together. We also have a wonderful suite for the cats complete with perches, a window view, and all those fun little toys cats love.

#### What to Expect After Your Pet's Vaccination

Congratulations. By vaccinating your pet, you have taken an important step toward protecting your pet and your family.

Vaccination is the most common veterinary preventive measure in history. It's a safe and effective way to protect pets and people from serious disease.

It's common for your pet to experience mild side effects from vaccination. Typically starting within hours of vaccination, any symptoms are most often mild and usually do not persist for more than a few days. This is a normal response by your pet's immune system during the process of developing protective immunity.