



Scratching Post

From the Kentwood Cat Clinic

Summer 2008

Kitten Wellness Care

By Dr. Maria Berger

Congratulations! You have a new addition to your family. A small, four footed ball of purring fluff has wiggled its way into your heart. Now what? Like all children, kittens need regular trips to the doctor to prevent illness, and to help them grow into healthy adults.

Out of all the very important medical needs of growing kittens, the most important is the need for a series of good, thorough, physical exams. In their first year, these little babies will experience all the physical growth that we humans go through in our first 15 years! It is imperative that they be checked periodically to be sure they are following the normal development for their species and breed. This is one of the many reasons we do a physical exam prior to any vaccinations.

All kittens need a blood test to check them for exposure to feline leukemia virus and feline immunodeficiency virus (feline AIDS). These are viruses that are passed to cats either through the birthing process or from direct contact with other cats. These viruses do not pass to people, and they cannot be passed to cats from other animals. Kittens/cats may carry the viruses for a long time in their bodies before they become ill. Since these diseases are ultimately fatal, it is important to know the status of your kitten **before** you bring it home and expose any of your resident cats to the newcomer.

Kittens, even those that remain inside, need a series of vaccinations to protect them from certain life threatening diseases: distemper, respiratory viruses, feline leukemia and rabies. These vaccines are started at approximately 8 weeks of age. Over a period of eight weeks the kitten must receive a series of three distemper, two leukemia and one rabies vaccines. The spacing of the vaccines is critical. To achieve the greatest protection against disease, the vaccines sets must be given every 3-4 weeks. If more than four weeks have passed between vaccinations, it will be necessary to restart the vaccine series.

It is also very important that you bring in a sample of your kitten's bowel movement to be checked for internal parasites. Parasites come in two forms—worms and microscopic organisms. They can be passed to kittens and cats in a variety of ways: directly from the mother cat through the placenta or through nursing, from hunting and eating insects and animals, from eating fleas while grooming, or through direct contact with contaminated soil. Unless a kitten happens to vomit up a worm for you, most of the time you will not know that parasites are present. At the veterinarian's office, the stool will be examined under a microscope to look for parasite eggs. Proper deworming medication can then be prescribed. Even if a kitten's stool sample does not show eggs, we will deworm them for a particular parasite called the "roundworm". This parasite can be difficult to diagnose, and under certain circumstances it can be

transmitted to people. A series of three dosages of roundworm dewormer is the current recommendation.

The information described above is what we consider the core of any young kitten wellness program. We will tailor our care to meet the specific needs of your feline friend. Sometimes it can seem a little intimidating to be taking on the responsibility of a new kitten; but remember, we are here to help. Please feel free to call if you have any questions about your new family member!



Misty our newest clinic kitty

Kitten Packages

By Marla Mountain

There once was a kitten named Chelsea
Whose owner wanted her healthy
She came to the clinic
So she wouldn't get sick
And helped her owner stay wealthy.

Have you recently adopted (or been adopted by) a new feline family member? Here at the Kentwood Cat Clinic, we want to do everything we can to help your new kitty have a healthy start. We offer two packages of services that will see your kitty through all the testing and vaccines he or she will need for the first year of life. If your kitty is less than 12 weeks old, we will do a full comprehensive physical exam, test kitty's blood for feline leukemia and FIV (feline immunodeficiency virus) and test a stool sample to check for internal parasites. We will treat for the parasites (most kitties have them) and start the distemper combo vaccine. At the second visit, we will do the second distemper combo and start the feline leukemia vaccines and re-treat for internal parasites. The third visit we will give the last distemper and feline leukemia vaccines and also give a one-year rabies vaccine and treat for internal parasites again. If you have been adopted by an older kitty whose medical history is unknown, we would do all the same testing but kitty would only need two distemper combo vaccines and so there would only be two visits to complete all the testing and vaccines. Purchase of



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the kitten package would also give you 10% off pre-surgical blood-work for one year, 10% off flea and heartworm prevention for one year, complimentary nail trims for one year and a complimentary fluoride treatment with spay or neuter surgery. The cost of the kitten package for a kitty under 12 weeks of age is \$312.20 and for older cat adoptions, the cost is \$250.79. Both of these packages save you 10% on the cost of the vaccines and testing alone and offer more savings with the free nail trims and discounts on the flea and heartworm prevention.



Do You Speak Cat? Topics in Feline Behavior Normal Kitten Development

By Dr. Maria Berger

Understanding kitten behavior starts with understanding the normal stages of feline development. Kittens, like humans, follow very set patterns of physical and social development. Understanding these stages allows us to know what to expect and to have realistic expectations of their needs and behaviors. There are four stages:

1. **Neonatal Period: birth–2 weeks.** The kittens are totally dependent on a milk diet. Minimal social interactions occur. The mother cat stimulates elimination through grooming. The kittens only need to nurse, sleep, and stay warm next to mom. This is the prime time for mother cat to bond with her kittens and establish a routine, allowing her to feel secure and calm about the safety of her nest. Handling of the kittens should be kept to a minimum to avoid agitating the mother. By day fourteen, the kittens' eyes are open and they are walking. They still cannot regulate their own body temperature or groom themselves at this point.
2. **Early Socialization: 3-8 weeks.** The kittens begin to eat solid food, and gradually cease milk consumption. They develop bladder and bowel control and begin to use the litter box on their own. Regulation of their own

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body temperature begins, and they learn how to groom themselves. Littermates start to engage in social play around three weeks. Frequent, gentle handling by varied people (men, women, and supervised children) is extremely important. This is the stage that trust of humans is established, and it lays the foundation for later bonding to a human family. Caregivers need to provide a safe environment that is rich in physical toys and mental puzzles to encourage the fullest degree of development. Training should also begin at this time: handling of ears, mouth, nail trimming, grooming, using a scratching post, walking on a harness and leash, etc. Never use fingers or toes to rough house with kittens as this teaches bad habits. Always use a toy instead.

3. **Late Socialization: 9-16 weeks.** This is one of the most important periods from the standpoint of having a socially well adjusted pet. Kittens are now totally weaned to solid food. They continue to learn important social skills and social play peaks during this period. Conflict over social status among littermates may occur. As the kittens mature, they engage less in social play and more in object play (playing with toys). By twelve weeks, play patterns may start to resemble fighting more than playing. Ideally, kittens should remain with their mother and littermates for 12 weeks. Kittens separated from their family too early, or raised without littermates, don't learn some very important social skills. They may overreact (bite too hard) during play or social interactions with other cats or humans. They do not accept other cats in the environment as easily as kittens that have the benefit of longer socialization periods. In addition, kittens that are excluded from human interactions and handling between 2-9 weeks of age are at increased risk for interacting poorly with humans later in life.
4. **Adolescence: 17 weeks -1 year.** During this period, kittens reach sexual maturity if they are not neutered. Urine spraying may occur if they are left intact, and they may wander farther a field if let outside. Social play lessens during this period. (This is a natural stage of development and has nothing to do with the neuter surgery.) Most kittens at this age are subordinate to larger and older adult cats, but some may start to challenge the older cats for status. These adolescents will not be considered socially mature by other cats until they are 2-3 years old.

While the environment, both physical and social, plays a huge role in the development of kittens, genetic variables do affect some aspects of feline temperament. For example, the offspring of friendly fathers tend to be quicker to approach people, while the offspring of timid fathers tend to be shyer. Since father cats play no role in the upbringing of the kittens, this finding must be due to genetics.



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Feline behavior is fascinating. The more we learn about what influences these behaviors, the closer we become to becoming fluent in “cat”.

The preceding information was adapted from “Feline Behavior Guidelines” from the American Association of Feline Practitioners, and Cat vs. Cat, by Pam Johnson-Bennett.

Rabies

By John Gaylord

The newspapers have been reporting growing incidents of rabies. In particular Allegan county has been singled out with a significant outbreak with at least 2 reports of people undergoing treatment for rabies potential exposure from bats.

Below I have posted information from the Michigan state website concerning protecting your pets from infection. The key is to note that once infected there is no post-exposure treatment for animals. Only preventive rabies vaccinations can protect your pet.

How to reduce your pet's chance of exposure to a rabid animal.

Be a responsible pet owner:

- Keep vaccinations up-to-date for all dogs, cats, ferrets, horses, cattle, and sheep. Michigan law requires that dogs must be vaccinated for rabies and it is recommended that cats, ferrets, and domestic livestock be vaccinated if a licensed vaccine exists.
- Vaccination is important for keeping your pet from getting rabies, but it also provides a barrier of protection for you if a wild animal bites your pet.
- There is no post-exposure prevention treatment available for animals. As a result, unvaccinated pets and domestic animals that are exposed to a potential rabies carrier may be required to be euthanized.
- Do not keep wild animals or exotic animals as pets. No rabies vaccine is licensed for use in these species and wild animals may not be kept except by persons who possess Wildlife Rehabilitation permits.
- Keep your pets under direct supervision so they do not come in contact with wild animals that may be carrying rabies. If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance immediately.
- Call your local animal control agency to remove any stray animals from your neighborhood. Strays may be unvaccinated and could be infected with rabies.

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- If you decide to adopt a stray, have it examined by your veterinarian immediately to make sure it is healthy
- Spay or neuter your pets to help reduce the number of unwanted animals that may not be properly cared for or regularly vaccinated.



Avoid contact with unfamiliar animals:

- In Michigan, rabies most commonly occurs in bats, therefore, prevent bats from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, churches, schools, or other similar settings where they might come in contact with people and pets.
- Do not approach, handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with food, open garbage cans or litter. Tightly cap garbage cans. Feed pets indoors.
- NEVER adopt wild animals or bring them into your house. Do not try to nurse unfamiliar sick animals to health. Call animal control for assistance in these situations.
- Teach children NEVER to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly. “Love your own, leave other animals alone” is a good principle for children to learn.

New Faces



Mandi Cherpes

Mandi joined the KCC as a veterinary assistant the end of April. She is the mother of 4, ages 18 months to 9 years and doubles as a soccer mom, dance mom, wrestling mom in addition to running her own business doing signs for real estate companies. Mandi has always had a love for animals and at one time wanted to be a veterinarian. To move into the field she has completed an online course to be a veterinary assistant. She sees her new job here as great fun and a place to do adult things. She and her husband love to travel and love the outdoors. They started hiking on their honeymoon and now try to hike in a different state each year for their anniversary. Her hobbies include hiking, fishing, and mushroom hunting. Please join us in welcoming Mandi to the clinic.



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Michelle Layton

Michelle has joined us as a veterinary assistant in May. Originally from Rockford she now lives in Easttown and loves the area. She has finished up at Grand Rapids Community College and will be attending Grand Valley State in the fall. Her coursework is in wildlife biology and she would like to work with big cats, especially tigers. In her spare time she is a automotive mechanic and rebuilds classic cars. She likes camping and being outdoors. Michelle is a big soccer fan and plays in an indoor league. She also enjoys roadtrips and being with friends.

Michelle has 2 pit bulls from rescue shelters, 2 snakes and a cat. Sometime she would like to open a no kill shelter. Meanwhile she is content walking her dogs around the neighborhood.

How To Give Your Cat a Pill?



- Grasp cat firmly in your arms. Cradle its head on your elbow, just as if you were giving baby a bottle. Coo confidently, "That's a nice kitty." Drop pill into its mouth.
- Retrieve cat from top of lamp and pill from under sofa.
- Follow same procedure as in 1, but hold cat's front paws down with left hand and back paws down with

elbow of right arm. Poke pill into its mouth with right forefinger.

- Retrieve cat from under bed. Get new pill from bottle. (Resist impulse to get new cat.)
- Again proceed as in 1, except when you have cat firmly cradled in bottle-feeding position, sit down on edge of chair, fold your torso over cat, bring your right hand over your left elbow, open cat's mouth by lifting the upper jaw and pop the pill in - quickly. Since your head is down by your knees, you won't be able to see what you're doing. That's just as well.
- Leave cat hanging on drapes. Leave pill in your hair.
- If you're a woman, have a good cry. If you're a man, have a good cry.
- Now pull yourself together. Who's the boss here anyway? Retrieve cat and pill. Assuming position 1, say sternly, "Who's the boss here, anyway?" Open cat's mouth, take pill and...Oooops!
- This isn't working, is it? Collapse and think. Aha! Those flashing claws are causing the chaos.
- Crawl to linen closet. Drag back large beach towel. Spread towel on floor.
- Retrieve cat from kitchen counter and pill from potted plant.
- Spread cat on towel near one end with its head over long edge.
- Flatten cat's front and back legs over its stomach. (Resist impulse to flatten cat.)
- Roll cat in towel. Work fast; time and tabbies wait for no man-or woman.
- Resume position 1. Rotate your left hand to cat's head. Press its mouth at the jaw hinges like opening the petals of a snapdragon.
- Drop pill into cat's mouth and poke gently. Voila! It's done.
- Vacuum up loose fur (cat's). Apply bandages to wounds (yours).
- Take two aspirins and lie down.

Coupon for 10% off 6 month supply or more of Heartgard or Revolution
Expires June 30,2008 1 per pet



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Kentwood Cat Clinic Bed and Breakfast

We Provide

Regional cuisine

Your familiar food will be offered morning and evening. We stock over 50 dry diets and 30 canned varieties to meet almost every taste. Canned food is served at body temperature for full sensory appeal. If your tastes are highly selective, we will have take-out (from home) requested to keep you happy during your stay. Otherwise we will match your diet as closely as possible from the in-house menu.

Scenic View

By booking ahead, you may reserve an upper or lower bunk on our garden-side view. We offer a bird feeder with heavy visitation year-round and a pond during the summer months. Sunshine in windows 4-6 hours daily (weather permitting), with seasonal variation in time of day.

Accommodations

Your room is an individual 3-level area with one side plexiglass against the wall of windows. The opposite side is screened. Other residents will be audible but not visible allowing comfortable privacy. Supervision of the staff is expected from most residents eager for attention and food.



Bedding is provided and changed as needed. You are welcome to bring a favorite bed with you as long as the room can accommodate it. For our typical visitors, a thick towel and bed are provided on the first level with their litter box. Food and water are on the second level (farther from the litter box). The top level is reserved for lounging. Litter is unscented clay so that we may discard all the litter with each use and provide a clean new box each time.

Glass dishes are used for food so residual odors are not a problem.

If our guest is unable to manage a multi-level room, reservations can be made for a single level room in the hospital area.

Happy Hour

Served between 5:00-7:00 pm daily, catnip will rain down in each room for the enjoyment of our guests. Fresh catnip will be available in season, though we always stock dry.

Exercise Time

As able, we rotate our extended stay guests through our playpen. This area is roughly 6 times the size of our regular rooms and allows family groups to socialize, kittens to act wild, and all others a chance to just stretch their legs. This room also has a garden view.

Medical Care

We have a doctor available at all times for consultation or emergency care. We do require an emergency contact person's name and phone number while you visit with us.

We are able to administer any medication our guests may be taking. Timing may need to be tweaked to coincide with our usual hours of operation.

Personal Monitoring

To ensure our guests' continued well-being, intake and output are noted and charted three times daily. Food, canned and dry, is measured when given and when changed. We note urine and fecal output so we can catch any problems early. As always, we try to monitor how each guest is feeling so we can try to help them feel more comfortable with changes in bedding, organization of their room or neighbors. All our staff are very feline oriented. We are happy to see new faces and get to know our guests better and in less stressful circumstances. Staying with us also gives the benefit of getting used to the clinic smells and noises so they are not as stressed when hospitalized for medical care or coming for routine care.

Thank you for choosing Kentwood Cat Clinic for your stay. A souvenir toy (type varies) will go home with each guest.