

Nutrition of Kittens

Your kitten's health and vitality depends on what you feed it. Kittens need the right balance of nutrients carefully matched to their age and activity level. They need a diet that provides the right amount of quality proteins, fats and carbohydrates but also avoids potentially harmful excess minerals and salt.

Fat, protein and minerals, like calcium and phosphorus, help build strong bones and muscles and they provide plenty of energy for growth and play.

Nutritionally balanced formulas

- No need for added meat or supplements.
- Avoids nutritional excesses and deficiencies.
- High in essential fatty acids for a glossy, healthy coat.



Highly palatable and digestible

- Less odour and mess to clean up.
- Concentrated so a smaller amount of food is required.

Formulas matched to every pets 'life stage'

- Formulas are available to suit every 'life stage' and activity level.
- Kitten food should be fed until 1 year of age.

Economical and convenient

- Cost effective pet food that provides better nutrition.
- The choice of dry, canned and 'treats'.

Antioxidant Protection

- Antioxidants help strengthen the immune system and avoid the risk of disease.
- Free radicals, such as UV light and pollution, attack cells causing damage which can result in a weakened immune system and possibly serious diseases.

Talk to one of our friendly staff to help you choose a suitable food for you puppy.

De-sexing

Statistics have shown that de-sexed animals are less susceptible to disease, live longer and fit into our society a lot better. The benefits of de-sexing are:

Males

- Neutering alters male behaviours but the changes are all good!
- Reduced urge to mark their territory with urine spraying
- Reduced fighting with other males
- Reduced wandering at night and potential for trauma (eg. Road accidents)
- Reduced risk of contracting Feline FIV (Feline Aids)
- Prevents unwanted pregnancies and homeless kittens

Females

- Your cat will not come into season and therefore you will not be woken in the middle of the night by her calling (Unless pregnant or neutered, she will call on and off all summer)
- Prevents male cats visiting your property
- Cats may have 2 to 3 litters per season, which can put a huge amount of stress on her physically and nutritionally
- It will prevent unwanted pregnancies and homeless kittens
- Prevents disease such as pyometra (uterine infection)

Your cat can be de-sexed from the age of five months.

The de-sexing surgery is performed under a general anaesthetic after receiving a complete physical exam to ensure your pet is in good health. A female desexing operation is called a “spey” and a male’s is a “castrate”. For males, it is a very quick and un-invasive procedure and they will have 2 small incisions over the scrotum which heal without sutures. For a spey, the surgical procedure involves removal of the uterus and ovaries through a small flank incision and will require 2-3 small stitches. Your cat will be closely monitored by an anaesthetic nurse during the procedure, whilst a fully trained veterinarian will perform the surgery. All cats will be able to go home the same day as the surgery and recovery times are excellent. Female cats will receive 3 day’s postoperative pain relief.

Vaccination

Vaccinations are recommended at 9 and 12 weeks of age. A booster vaccination will need to be given one year following the third shot. Vaccination is required annually after that. There are several diseases which can be vaccinated against which may cause serious illness or death.

Feline enteritis

This is a virus which causes depression, loss of appetite, severe vomiting, and diarrhoea, often with blood and abdominal pain. The death rate with this disease is high. It can cause pregnant cats to abort or lead to kittens with abnormalities and brain damage.

Cat 'Flu'

This is mainly caused by Feline Calici or Rhinotracheitis Virus, although other viruses and bacteria can cause similar signs including sneezing, coughing, discharge from eyes, loss of appetite, and tongue ulcers. It is rare for adult animals to die from this condition but it can be fatal in kittens. The disease can affect your cat for weeks, and may relapse, especially in times of stress. Vaccination will dramatically reduce the chance of your cat becoming ill with cat flu.

Chlamydomphila Felis

This most commonly causes conjunctivitis, swollen or closed eyes, and discharge from the eyes. Mild sneezing and nasal discharge may also occur. Young kittens are frequently affected, but older cats are also susceptible. Vaccination is highly recommended, and is included in standard cat vaccinations at VE Vets. Chlamydomphila is a common problem in our area, so we recommend ensuring your cat is vaccinated against it.

All catteries require your cat to be fully vaccinated before they will accept them.

It is extremely important to bring your cat to see the vet at least once per year for an annual health check and vaccination. This enables us to monitor your pet's health and growth as well as detecting problems as early as possible.

Remember, prevention is better than treatment!

Feline AIDS

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV), which is also known as 'Cat AIDS', is a fatal viral disease that interferes with the immune system of infected cats. The virus causes destruction of the white blood cells, which are important for fighting infections.

FIV is spread most commonly by a bite from an infected cat. Although some cats will show signs when first infected such as fever, loss of appetite, and lethargy, many cats will remain healthy (but infected) for up to 10 years without showing signs.

As the virus progresses, you may notice signs such as weight loss, sores in or around the mouth, and chronic or recurrent infections. Although infections can be managed with antibiotics, there is no treatment for FIV, and it is inevitably fatal.

How can you protect your cat?

FIV is becoming increasingly common, however vaccine is available and is the best way to protect your cat.

- The vaccination consists of three injections given 2-4 weeks apart, then an annual booster. These are different from the 'regular' vaccine that your cat requires, but can be given at the same time.
- Kittens can be vaccinated from 8 weeks old. As the virus is relatively common, we need to test adult cats (6 months or older) before beginning the vaccination course, this requires a simple blood test.
- Desexing your cat will also reduce the risk of infection, as entire cats are more likely to fight.

We advise microchipping your cat if you choose to vaccinate against FIV, as the test most commonly used for FIV would be positive after vaccination.

While FIV is related to HIV (the virus responsible for AIDS in people), there is no risk of catching this disease from your cat.

Worms

An adult worm can lay up to 20000 eggs per year and some eggs can survive for up to 5 years in the environment.

After hatching, worms can infect your pet via uncooked meat, rodents or through the skin. Even a sniff of the ground can be enough to cause infection. Some types of worms can be transmitted to kittens before they are born.

Intestinal worms can infest humans. Children, who are often closest to the family pets and play in dirt, are most at risk. Signs in children can be severe in some cases – including neurological signs and lifelong vision impairment.

How do I know my cat or kitten may have worms?

- Loss of appetite
- Stunted growth/weight loss
- Coat is in poor condition
- Diarrhoea (sometimes can be bloody)
- Pot belly appearance
- Vomiting (a worm may even be seen)
- Anaemia (pale gums)
- Worm segments around the anal area – these look like small grains of rice
- Continual licking of the anal area

As many of these signs can be caused by things other than worms, please seek advice from your veterinarian if you are concerned. Diarrhoea and vomiting can be a sign of more severe diseases, which may need prompt treatment to prevent significant illness or even death.

Types of worms

Roundworms

Roundworms can be passed on to humans, especially children. They can also be exceptionally good survivors and are able to live outside the animal for several years. Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhoea, 'pot belly' and colic.

Tapeworms

The common flea tapeworm larvae develop inside the flea. When your kitten eats the infected flea while grooming itself, the tapeworm develops in your kittens gut. Flea control is therefore also important in controlling worms. Tapeworms can also be passed onto cats from small birds and rodents.

Lungworm

This worm usually affects adult cats, and can be passed to cats through prey including birds. Coughing is the most common sign of infection. Lungworm is not controlled by standard worm treatments, so a consult with a vet will be required to diagnose and treat.

Treatment of Worms

Kittens should be wormed every 2 weeks from 2 to 12 weeks of age. From 12 weeks to 6 months cats should be wormed monthly. Once 6 months and older worming should be done every 3 months with a good broad spectrum wormer. A pregnant female should be treated during pregnancy and 3 weeks after giving birth.

Talk to our staff for more information on the best product for your pet.

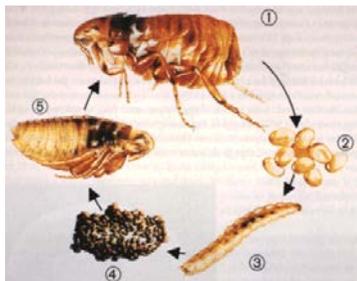
Fleas

Fleas can affect all animals, even the most looked after pet. Although you don't always see them, they are a year-round problem. Fleas may be picked up while walking, in the garden and from other animals that they have contact with. If your pet is scratching more than normal, losing hair or getting bald patches over the back and around the tail you should suspect fleas. If you part your pet's fur you may see fleas or flea droppings (tiny black specks which will stain red if placed on white damp paper).



The Flea Life Cycle

Each flea can lay up to 50 eggs a day into the surrounding environment. Eggs hatch into larvae which make up 50% of the flea population. Larvae feed on the faeces of the adult flea and make up 35% of the flea population. Larvae then pupate and develop into adults. They can develop in 5 days in ideal conditions but can also remain in the environment for 140 days (such as when a house is uninhabited). They emerge from pupae in response to ground vibrations or other similar stimuli, so can await a host for a long period of time.



The adult flea begins to feed within seconds of finding a host and may bite humans before finding a preferred host. They can survive for up to six months without a blood meal and can live for up to two years producing 50 eggs per day. Adult fleas only make up 5% of the flea population which is why year-round flea treatment of ALL pets is vital. When a severe flea infestation is present it can take up to one year to gain control of flea burdens due to the number of immature fleas in the environment.

Flea treatments are now available at your veterinary clinic in topical or tablet forms. They control eggs, larvae and pupae in the environment, as well as adult fleas.

Talk to our qualified staff to discuss the most suitable treatment for your pet.

Microchipping

Microchipping is now legally required in all non-working dogs and is necessary for registration with your local council.

A microchip is a small implant which contains a unique number. It is approximately the size of a grain of rice and sits under the skin for the lifetime of the pet without causing pain or irritation to the animal. Microchipping can be done at any age. It is a minor procedure that is done without anaesthetic. The microchip is applied with a needle into the scruff of the neck.

The New Zealand Companion Animal Register (<http://www.animalregister.co.nz>) has been set up to provide a 24 hour-a-day database so that lost and found pets can be quickly returned to their owners. Your details can be updated online at any time at no charge. Registration to this database is optional so please ask if you would like your pet to be added (a small once-off fee applies).