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CARING FOR YOUR ADULT CAT

This fact sheet has been put together by Greenbay Vets to help you provide the best for your much loved cat.

Keeping Your Cat Happy

Some cats liked to be stroked and held, but many cats prefer to be independent and don't enjoy being restrained. The key is to let your cat control when and where interaction occurs. Playing with your cat is a great way to keep your cat happy and increase your bond. Most cats like toys which replicate natural hunting behaviour.

Cat flaps are commonly used to facilitate outdoor access. Some cats will see the cat flap as a weak point in their territory's defences, as other cats could come in via the flap. Try to locate your cat's resources away from the cat flap and consider using a cat flap which reads your cat's microchip, to prevent intruders.

Water bowls should be available in several locations throughout the house, and placed away from food bowls. Litter trays should be positioned in quiet areas, away from food and water. Ideally there should be one tray for each cat in the household, plus one extra. Providing a litter trays is recommended, even for cats free to roam outside, especially as they get older.

Cats like to have high places to observe from, private places to rest away from the chaos of the family home and warm places to sleep. Every cat is different, some will enjoy the company of other cats, humans or even a dog, whereas others prefer to keep themselves to themselves.

General Health

Cats are masters of disguise, and will hide signs of illness. This means that by the time obvious signs are showing, a disease can be severe. You know your own cat better than anybody, so don't ignore any early warnings such as a change in coat, activity levels or behaviour. Changes in weight, appetite or the amount of water drunk can all be indicators of a problem. If you are concerned about your cat, book an appointment with your vet and be sure to tell them all the things you have noticed.

It is recommended to consider health screening, such as urine and blood pressure checks, once your cat is aged 7 or over. For more information see our older cat fact-sheet or speak to a member of our team.

Grooming

Long-haired cats, especially Persian cats, need regular grooming. This especially applies to older cats, who may be less able to reach everywhere themselves. It is best to try and get cats used to being groomed from a young age. If there are matts of fur these may need to be carefully removed, speak to us for advice.

Breeds of cat with flat faces e.g. Persians may suffer from tear overflow, leading to fur staining and some discomfort. You can gently wipe away the tears with a cotton wool ball dampened in boiled, cooled water. Use a separate ball for each eye, and be careful not to touch the eyeball itself.

Outdoors cats tend to take care of their own claws. Indoor cats will need a scratching post and may need their claws trimmed. Older cats may not retract their claws properly, and these can become overgrown and even curl back into the footpad - be sure to keep a close eye on your cats claws as they get older to prevent this painful problem.

Your cat may allow you to brush their teeth, especially if you started when they were a kitten, but some cats will not tolerate this. It is important that a vet checks your cats teeth regularly for early signs of problems, as cats will put up with a serious tooth ache before they show any signs such as bad breath or going off their food.

Taking Your Cat To The Vets

It is recommended that all cats are checked at least once a year by a vet, usually this is combined with their vaccination booster. Older cats should be checked more regularly.

For most cats (and their owners), a visit to the vets is a stressful experience. We try to minimise this stress as much as possible. Tips to prevent stress:

- Use a good cat carrier, one that opens at the top is much easier for the vet to gently lift the cat out of and for you to put the cat into. Cover the carrier with a towel, try to stay calm and drive gently. Try to get your cat used to the carrier as a nice place to be at home, rather than something that only comes out when a visit to the vets is needed.
- Provide familiar smells for the cat e.g. bedding, a piece of your clothing.
- If your cat panics at the sight of the carrier, wrap the cat in a towel or blanket and place the cat and towel into the carrier.
- Try to keep the cat away from any dogs in the waiting room and place the carrier above floor level if possible. Our team will try to facilitate this.
- Cats usually need time to calm down, which is part of the reason we provide 15 minute consultations. The vet may ask a nurse or assistant to hold your cat so it can be examined or treated safely.
- If you are unsure about anything the vet says, or are not sure how to give your cat medications, ask the staff. We will be happy to talk things through and give you a demonstration.
- When arriving home your cat may smell different, so introduce it gradually back to any other cats and keep an eye on them.

Vaccinations

It is recommended to vaccinate **all cats** against cat flu and enteritis (panleucopaenia), starting with a course of injections as a kitten and then an annual booster. Feline Leukaemia Virus is spread between cats by contact, so this vaccine is recommended if your cat goes outdoors or mixes with any other cats. Side effects of vaccination are not common, but the vet will be happy to discuss any concerns with you.

Worming and Flea Treatment

The most common worms cats can get are called roundworms and tapeworms. Most infected cats do not show any signs of having worms, but they can cause weight loss, tummy upsets and an itchy bottom. Some worms can also be passed on to humans. It is therefore advisable to regularly worm your cat. Our vets will recommend a safe and effective treatment for your pet. If your cat is difficult to tablet, there are spot-on products available.

All cats, including indoor ones, should be treated for fleas all year round. Effective prevention is much simpler than curing an infestation. There is a wide range of products available - prescription treatments are the most effective and can only be supplied by a veterinary surgery to animals under the care of a vet.

For more information see our cat parasites fact-sheet.

Micro-chipping

This is a permanent form of identification. The microchip is about the size of a grain of rice and is inserted into the scruff of your cat's neck, similar to an injection. If your cat is found and taken to a veterinary surgery, police station, rescue centre etc. then the microchip enables them to be identified and returned to you, even if they have lost their collar. It is vital to keep your contact details up to date on the microchip database.

Diet/Nutrition

It is very difficult to design a balanced diet for a cat based on home-cooked ingredients. The easiest way to give your cat a balanced diet is to feed him/her a proprietary, good quality diet. It is important to feed a diet designed for your cat's life stage - senior diets, for example, are designed to put less pressure on the older cat's kidneys. You should use the packet feeding instructions initially, but this is just a guide so if your cat is gaining too much weight you will need to reduce it. If your cat is given extra food as treats, reduce the amount of food given in the main meal so they don't get too many calories. Cat obesity is a big health problem - our vets and nurses will be happy to weigh your cat and assess it's condition so you know whether or not they are a healthy weight.

We hope that you have found this fact sheet helpful.