



## GUIDE TO YOUR NEW KITTEN

Congratulations on your new kitten! We hope you are enjoying the recent addition to your family. This guide is a brief overview of kitten basics. To be at their best, cats have some basic needs; providing them will help ensure your cat's long-term health and welfare. If these needs are not met, your cat may feel stressed, which can affect both health and behavior. The following are some ideas to get off to the purrfect start.

### PRIVATE SPACE

- Cats seem to prefer having their own space, to feel like they are "in control"
  - Provide a private room complete with
    - Food and water
    - Bowls should be placed away from the litter box
  - A bed
    - The carrier with a soft pad inside is a great choice
    - Bed should be placed away from the litter box
  - A litter box
  - A scratching/climbing post
  - A window to look out of
  - Toys
- Give your cat a few days to get used to these surroundings and to get the sense that this space is a safe haven
  - Spend some time alone with your kitten in the room so you can get to know each other
  - Provide praise for using the toys, litter box and scratching/climbing post

### ELIMINATION/LITTER BOX

- Understanding the natural elimination habits of cats will help prevent problems from developing
  - Most cats are meticulously clean
    - They cover their waste and
    - Try to eliminate in areas that have not been used before
- Elimination is a basic need for biological reasons and for marking territory
  - To meet their territorial needs, provide at least one litter box per cat plus one extra
    - 2 cats = 3 litter boxes
      - Multiple boxes provide appropriate places to eliminate and mark territory without offending the household
    - A litter box should be located on every level of the home
- It is crucial that we provide positive litter box experiences so the cat will continue to use the boxes provided
  - Cats will avoid anything that has been associated with a negative experience
    - Difficulties getting to or into the box
    - Getting startled while using the box
    - Negative experience while leaving the box
    - Urinary tract conditions

### CHOOSING A BOX

- Litter boxes need to be big enough for cats to enter and move around in
  - Larger pans provide a bigger area for the cat to eliminate in without stepping in the old eliminations
    - Kittens, older cats and cats with health problems may need easy entry and exit from the box
- Uncovered boxes have easier accessibility
- May not provide the privacy some cats desire



- A covered box may be more attractive
  - Make sure the lid is secure so it can't move and startle your cat while using the box
  - May need to be scooped and cleaned more often to keep it appealing to the cat
    - Do not store the scooper or anything on the cover that could fall and startle the cat
- Provide both types and keep using the one the cat chooses
  - If your cat uses both then keep both

## CHOOSING LITTER

- Research has shown that most cats prefer
  - Fine- grained litters
  - Scoopable litters usually have finer grains than clay litters
- Many cats prefer unscented litters
  - Do not place room deodorizers or air fresheners near the box
- Once you find a litter that your cat likes, stick with it.
  - Abrupt changes can result in the cat not using the litter box
- Your cat's health may require a dust free litter
  - If you need to change litter type, offer the new box or litter beside the old one and carefully observe the cat's response to the change
  - When it is time to return to the original substrate, put the litter pans with the substrate back in their original locations and observe observe the cat's response to the change
    - Upper respiratory infections
    - Asthma
    - Other breathing problems
    - Post surgical procedures

## • HOW MUCH LITTER TO USE?

- Some cats prefer lots of litter, others want very little
- Fill the box half way, vary the amount from shallow at one end to deep at the other end.
  - Observe where the cat eliminates
    - Proceed to fill the box to that level

## • LOCATION

- Place in areas that provide
  - easy access for the cat, while providing some
  - privacy and a clear escape route
- They must be located away from unexpected noises or being startled while in the litter box
  - Appliances
  - Air ducts
  - Another animal or human sneaking up on your cat
- Box placed in an area that has a door
  - wedge the door open to prevent the cat from getting trapped in the area.
- Placing a rug or placemat under the box helps to
  - Avoid scattered litter
  - Make it easier to keep the area clean



## • **CLEANING**

- Litter pans need to be scooped daily
- Clean the litter pans once a week with water and a non-scented soap
  - Some circumstances require cleaning the boxes more often
- Do not use ammonia or strong smelling cleaners for this job.
  - A cat's urine contains ammonia compounds and strong cleaners may be toxic to the cat
- Odor shouldn't be a problem if the litter box is kept clean.
  - If you find the odor offensive, your cat may also find it offensive and not want to eliminate there
  - A thin layer of baking soda placed on the bottom of the box will help absorb odors between scoopings

## **SCRATCHING**

- Scratching is a natural and uncontrollable behavior of cats
  - Cats scratch to
    - Stretch the muscles and tendons of the
      - Toes
      - Shoulder
      - Neck
  - Mark their territory
  - Shed the outside nail husk to maintain good claw health
  - Decrease stress and unwanted behaviors
  - Declawed cats retain the instinct to scratch
- The nails have multiple uses
  - Hunting
  - Defense
  - Balance
  - Grooming
- Adolescent cats have a tendency to play rough
  - Sometimes violently by scratching
    - Their owners
    - Objects
    - Other pets
  - This behavior can destroy the bond between owner and pet

## **SCRATCHING POSTS**

- Provides cats with a safe outlet for scratching
  - Scratching posts should be stabilized to ensure that they don't move or tip over and scare/hurt your cat
- Cats often scratch objects near sleeping areas and room entrances
  - Scratching posts should be located in these and other "public" parts of the house that the whole family uses
    - Sleeping areas
    - Room entrances
    - Food/water bowls/litter box locations
  - In multi-cat households should have several scratching posts, both vertical and horizontal, throughout the house
    - Provides the cats with an acceptable place to leave their mark without ruining furniture and carpets
- Choose a similar material your cat most likes to scratch
  - Cats prefer scratching posts made out of rough material they can shred
    - Sisal (a coarse natural fiber) satisfies urge to scratch and is tough enough to stand up to repeated use



- Vertical (upright)
  - Cats that scratch chair legs or the corners of your couch may prefer a vertical scratching post.
  - Make sure that vertical scratching posts are tall enough so your cat can stretch up while she scratches.
- Horizontal (flat)
  - Cats that scratch rugs and carpets may prefer a horizontal scratching post or mat
  - Available in a variety of sizes and materials including sisal, carpet and cardboard
- **DISCOURAGING INAPPROPRIATE SCRATCHING**
- Considering your cat's demonstrated preferences, substitute similar objects to scratch
- Place the scratching post near the object you want the cat to stop scratching
  - Cover the inappropriate objects with something your cat will find unappealing
    - Double sided sticky tape
    - Aluminum foil
    - Sheets of sandpaper
    - A piece of plastic carpet runner with the pointy side up.
- Attaching cotton balls soaked with a citrus scent or perfume to inappropriate objects
  - Don't use anything that could harm the cat if she ingests it
  - Strong odors may cause nearby acceptable objects to be associated with the unpleasant smell
- Once your cat is consistently using the scratching post; it can be gradually moved to a location more suitable to you
  - It's best to keep the scratching post as close to your cat's preferred scratching locations as possible

## PERCHES

- A perch is a must have for your cat
  - A perch provides a safe and private climbing area to watch the action from above
- A perch is anything that allows your cat to lie, sit, sleep or look outside from above
  - You can place a couch, sofa, chair, or sturdy table in front of a window, so your cat can look outside
- Perches come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes
- More than one perch is great so your cat can look outside at different angles
- A bird feeder in the yard, planting pretty flowers to attract bees, butterflies, and other insects will provide hours of interest
- If you prefer an area different than where your cat chooses, you will need to coax her to or place them to the area you would like for them to use

## VIDEO STIMULATION

- Cats like visual stimulation due to their hunting heritage
  - If our cat doesn't have a window to look out of, use a videotape of a nature show that has live action with
    - Birds
    - Fish
    - Rodents
    - Insects
  - These videos are great when you can't be around to play with them



## TOYS

- Cats need a fun way to release energy and burn calories too!
- Cats like toys that do something, remind them of moving meals, enticing them to interact.
  - Squeak
  - Chirp
  - Jitter
  - Swing
  - Vibrate
- Identifying your cat's toy (prey) preference
  - Cats prefer to hunt specific creatures
    - Some cats prefer to chase mice
    - Others may prefer to catch birds or bugs
  - Identifying your cat's "prey preference" allows you to buy or make toys that your cat will be more likely to play with rather than ignore
  - You can identify your cat's prey preference by paying close attention to the way he/she reacts to toys
    - Find toys or objects that resemble birds
      - Feathers
      - Stuffed toys covered in feathers
      - Objects suspended in air
      - Toys making chirping noises
    - Entice your cat to play by making each object move and fly through the air.
      - Does your cat follow the object?
      - Does he follow all of the objects or ignore most of them?
        - If your cat seems to enjoy feathers and/or objects in the air, choose toys resembling birds
    - Put these objects out of sight
    - Find toys or objects resembling mice
      - Fur
      - Stuffed animals
      - Furry mice
      - Balls
    - Entice your cat to play by making each object move or roll past your cat
      - How does your cat react when you make each of these objects move?
      - Does kitty want to chase it?
        - If your cat prefers furry toys and/or toys moving on the ground, choose objects resembling mice
    - Try both "bird" and "mouse" toys at the same time by alternating them about every 20 seconds
      - Which does kitty prefer?
      - Does he prefer some of each kind?
        - Maybe he prefers both birds and mice!
    - Put these toys away
    - Find toys or objects resembling bugs
      - Laser toy
      - A string with a knot on the end
      - Dry food or treats tossed across the floor
    - Entice your cat to play by making each object shine or move
      - How does your cat react?
        - If your cat likes tiny objects with lots of movement, choose toys resembling bugs.
      - Try to alternate with "bird toys" and "mouse toys" to see which prey is best



One of the reasons that we have pets is so that we can cuddle and play with them. Such interactions are the source of much joy, but they can sometimes lead to injury to the pet or to the person. Rough play however, can lead to development of behavioral problems. Here are some basic guidelines for appropriate play with cats that can minimize these problems and may also lead people to more fully appreciate the intricacies of feline communication. Kittens, by their second month of life begin to pay more attention to people and use the same behaviors that they use to communicate with each other to try to communicate with humans. Many of these behaviors function to allow closeness and energetic play between cats and may help shape adult social behaviors and communication skills. Kittens remain youngsters until they are socially mature, which occurs at around 2 years of age. Accordingly, they cannot be expected to show the judgment and restraint that an older cat might. All social mammals play, so we are able to recognize signals from kittens that they wish to play and act on these impulses. Children do not exhibit exactly the same form of play as puppies and kittens do, in part, because humans can manipulate objects and each other with their hands. The tendency is for kittens to play with humans exactly as they would play with other kittens and for humans to mimic these kitten behaviors using their hands.

## **CLAWS AND SCRATCHING:**

- Kittens are able to reliably retract their claws after 4 weeks of age
- Kittens that are hand or bottle-reared tend to play more roughly with their claws and teeth than those who have been naturally weaned by and kept with their mothers.
- If kittens are allowed to scratch at people, they will often continue this behavior as adults
- Kittens/cats should be redirected to an appropriate scratching object
- Cat scratch disease can be a serious concern for people who have been scratched by cats
- It is very important to thoroughly clean any scratches
- Consult with your physician if you have any concerns
- Keeping your cat's nails trimmed should be part of routine maintenance and care of your cat
- Nail trimming will help reduce the accidental scratches and snagging of the furniture or carpet
- See our "nail trimming tips" document

## **MOUthing AND BITING:**

- Kittens use their mouths much as humans use their hands
- Mouthing and biting are common complaints with young kittens
- Sometimes this results from inadvertently playing too rough with your kitten
- Kittens should be discouraged from mouthing or biting
- It is much easier to stop this behavior when it first starts, than it is to try and correct a long standing problem.
- The first thing you should do when your kitten mouths you is to say "no", stop, and gently remove your body part while holding the kitten
- If you pull your hand away from the kitten, even if doing so to avoid a prick, you are inadvertently encouraging the unwanted play
- Kittens/cats should be redirected to an appropriate playing object
- Cats' teeth are curved, small, and sharp providing the ideal environment for bacterial infection with a bite
- It is very important to wash any bites or scratches thoroughly
- Consult your physician if you have any concerns

## **BOXING, MOUNTING, REARING, AND POUNCING:**

- Boxing, mounting, rearing and pouncing are normal kitten behaviors
- These behaviors function to allow closeness and energetic play between animals and may serve to help shape adult social behaviors and communication skills
- When cats are small and light in weight, these wrestling and boxing behaviors tend to be harmless
- As the animal grows the pouncing and boxing can injure or scare a child



## **BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION:**

We need to protect both people and our pets from tragic events/injuries

- Human guidance must be provided because it is impossible to know whether a cat understands how fragile infants, young children, or aged, frail humans can be
- Kittens are energetic and very focused and will exhaust the average person almost instantly
- You are responsible for shaping the cat's behavior with positive kitten attention
  - If they are not able to get attention through positive means, they will get it through ones we consider negative
  - Young kittens are just like young children—if the only interaction they get is negative, they will learn to crave that negative interaction and, like children, they will intensify the negative behaviors to get ever-increasing amounts of response
- You must be vigilant and, if you are not able to do so, should consider placing the animal in a safe area (its own room, a crate, or a pen) until you feel that you have the energy again to face the onslaught of play
- You should also refrain from exhibiting what may be perceived to be human versions of feline correctional behaviors.
- These include hanging the kitten by its scruff, rolling it over, forcefully placing it on its back, or shaking the cat by its scruff or neck.
- First, these behaviors are not mimics of behavior that adult cats exhibit toward kittens.
- Second, even to the extent that these behaviors do overlap with corrections of cat behaviors, there is a real danger in overdoing them and causing the pet injury
- This is particular true with kittens
- Cats are tiny and, although adult cats frequently bite at or carry young cats by the nape of the neck, cats have pressure sensors under their teeth and can use just the right amount of control—people do not have this ability.
- Finally, these forceful kinds of correctional behaviors exhibited by people toward their pets may encourage physical solutions for problems that are better solved by an intellectual solution
- We should not have to manhandle a cat to convince the animal to alter its behavior—we should be smart enough to redirect that behavior in ways that can be mutually satisfying. The best emotional relationships with pets are founded on that basis and are devoid of fear and injury
- Cats and kittens DO NOT respond to force and reprimands only work if you catch your cat “in the act”
- Must be within a few seconds of “the act” or it won't stop him/her from doing it again and may even cause your cat to be afraid of you or the surroundings
- Being afraid may even cause him or her to try to defend himself
- If you do catch you cat making a mistake, it is better for both of you to create a distraction by making a loud noise or throwing something that will attract its attention, but not be associated with you
- If the cat associates the distraction as coming from you, they'll just learn to do it when you're not around
- Cats respond to praise when an appropriate behavior is exhibited and distraction when they make a “mistake”
- As soon as the cat is distracted, you can initiate appropriate play (e.g., introduce a feather on a string for the cat that lurks around corners and chases shoelaces or fingers) or take him or her to a location where the behavior is “ok” and praise them for doing it there
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## **CLIENTS WHO ADOPT KITTENS MUST BE REALISTIC AND LEARN TO READ THEIR KITTENS' SIGNALS WELL:**

- No rough play should be tolerated
- Toys should always be substituted for swatting at people
- Corrections should include distractions (loud noises) followed by a substitution with an appropriate toy and, if the cat pursues aggressive acts
- Unceremoniously dumped from the your lap
- Just stand and let it fall off—do not dangle any body parts in front of an aggressive cat) and ignore it until it has calmed down
- Once the cat has become calm, play can be reintroduced with a toy.
- It is important to not encourage the direction of the predatory or aggressive behavior towards humans



## COMFORTABLE VET VISITS

**OUR GOAL IS THAT YOUR KITTEN WILL HAVE A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE WITH US AND WE'LL BE HAPPY TO CONTINUE TO COME TO VISIT.** We look forward to many happy healthy years with your new friend. Many of these tips are useful for your adult cat as well.

These are some helpful tips to help make the puppy vaccination and exam series comfortable for all involved:

### CHOOSING A CARRIER

- Hard sided plastic
  - Most durable
  - Supportive
  - Easily cleaned
  - May be bulky
  - Multi-purposed
  - Multi openings
    - Carriers that open from the top and the front are useful for gently removing the cat from the carrier
- Soft Sided
  - Not as durable
    - Can be torn by nails
    - Some cats can push through the zippers
  - Not as supportive
  - Hard to clean
  - Hard to remove cat from the carrier due to floppiness of the sides
- Rolling suitcase style
  - Roomy
  - Most visible option for the cat
    - This may cause anxiety with some cats
  - Best for heavier cats or for people that have a hard time carrying objects
  - Hard to clean
  - Some cats may not like the sound or feeling of being rolled around in the carrier
- Adjusting to the carrier
  - Helping your kitten feel safe and comfortable with the carrier
  - Leave the carrier out at all times with the door off
    - Place a blanket & toy for comfort
    - Feed your kitten in the carrier
  - Take the carrier out and leave door open a few days before an appointment





# CRANSTON ANIMAL HOSPITAL

1119 PARK AVE,  
CRANSTON, RI 02910  
401.943.0770

- Travel time
  - Place a blanket & toy for comfort
  - Cover the carrier with a towel or blanket
    - This will reduce stress and stimulation
  - Use a separate carrier for each cat
    - This will prevent any stress related aggression
      - This can be present even with close relationships between the cats
  - Use Feliway
    - When comfortable and happy, cats mark their territory by rubbing their face against corners, furniture, people, or other cats at home.
      - These “happy messages” that are release upon facial rubbing provides calming and comfort message to cats
  - Feliway mimics the natural feline “happy messages” helping cats adjust to
    - Pace of family life
    - New changes in the environment
    - Restores calm
      - May help decrease urine spraying, scratching and hiding
- At the Veterinarian office
  - Try to keep the carrier off the floor
    - Place the carrier on an empty chair
    - Place the carrier on your lap
    - Place cat carrier under the chair with your legs in front of the carrier to avoid unwanted attention form other pets, if no other option
- Avoid setting the carrier
  - Near the door
  - Next t to a dog
  - Another cat
- To distract your kitten during the exam and vaccinations bring
  - A hungry kitten
  - Special treats/a small amount of food
- Once in the exam room leave the kitten in the carry until the doctor arrives
- During the exam we may
  - Try to distract your kitten with treats or play time
  - Use a towel with handling
    - This helps to distract and minimizes stress



## FELINE VACCINATION PROTECTION

### FELINE VIRAL RHINOTRACHEITIS (FELINE HERPESVIRUS)

- Major cause of feline upper respiratory infections
- Transmission may occur during pregnancy (in utero) or by the coughing and sneezing from an infected cat
- Signs include sneezing, runny nose, watery eyes, and fever
- Prognosis is good though young kittens and geriatric cats can be more severely affected
- Cats are usually carriers for life
- Vaccination recommended for all cats
- Our FVRCP vaccine boosts the immune system's suppression of this virus

### FELINE CALICIVIRUS

- Major cause of feline upper respiratory disease, often in conjunction with feline rhinotracheitis
- Transmitted by coughing and sneezing from an infected cat
- Signs include sneezing, fever, oral ulcers
- Prognosis is good though young kittens and geriatric cats can be more severely affected
- Vaccination recommended for all cats
- Our FVRCP vaccine provides strong immunity against this virus

### FELINE PANLEUKOPENIA (FELINE PARVOVIRUS OR DISTEMPER)

- Highly contagious virus that destroys certain cells in the bone marrow, lymph tissue, intestines, and brain
- Transmitted by saliva, mucus, and secretions from infected cats, the virus can survive in the environment for up to a year
- Signs include high fever, vomiting, and dehydration
- Poor prognosis in young cats
- Vaccination recommended for all cats
- Our FVRCP vaccine provides immunity against this virus

### RABIES VIRUS

- Incurable central nervous system disease that can infect ALL mammals
- Transmitted through the saliva of an infected animal
- Signs include any sudden, significant changes in behavior or unexplained paralysis
- Fatal prognosis
- Vaccination is required by law

### FELINE LEUKEMIA VIRUS (FELV)

- Virus that causes malignancies including leukemia as well as life threatening immunosuppression
- Transmitted through saliva, young cats are particularly susceptible
- Signs vary greatly and infected cats often appear healthy for months to years
- Prognosis varies as cats can survive for years before succumbing to disease
- Vaccination is recommended for cats that go outdoors, cats that live with outdoor cats or FeLV positive cats, and cats in breeding facilities



## FELINE VACCINE SCHEDULE

### CORE VACCINES

- These diseases involved have significant morbidity/mortality rates and are widely distributed throughout the population
- Vaccination results in relatively good protection from diseases

### DISTEMPER

- Under the age of 16 weeks
  - Between the ages of 6 weeks and 16 weeks of age the kitten will receive a vaccine every 3 weeks
  - Kittens presented at the age of 16 weeks should receive two vaccines three weeks apart
  - Kittens that are in a high-risk environment should have their final vaccine between the ages of 16 and 20 weeks
  - High-risk environments include
    - High occurrence of distemper positive cases in the population
    - Kitten with significant exposure to other cats or contaminated environments
- 16 to 20-weeks old
  - Two vaccines three weeks apart
- Boosters
  - All cats will need a booster in one year
  - This vaccine will then provide 3 years of protection

### RABIES

- One vaccine for all kittens no earlier than 12-weeks old
- Boosters
  - A second dose is required within a year of the initial vaccine
  - We offer a 1yr vaccine or a 3yr vaccine but prefer to use the 1yr vaccine due to safety reasons for your cat
    - A non-adjuvant vaccine (1yr)
      - The vaccine strain in the vaccine is a "carrier" virus that has been given a gene that makes it able to produce part of rabies virus called "glycoprotein G"
      - When a cat is given the vaccine, the immune system recognizes the rabies glycoprotein G as "foreign" and makes antibodies against it so the immune system can respond and protect against infection if exposed to the rabies virus in real life
      - The vaccine delivers everything needed to induce immunity without any of the unnecessary adjuvants that have posed risk to feline patients in the past, such as injection site reactions, chronic inflammation, and cancerous growth formation
    - An adjuvant vaccine (3yr)
      - A substance is added to the vaccine to stimulate the immune system and increase the effectiveness of the vaccine
      - In recent years some of the vaccines carrying an adjuvant have been linked to serious vaccine reactions like chronic injection site inflammation and cancerous growth formation

### NON-CORE VACCINES

- Optional vaccine that should be considered in light of the exposure risk if your pet goes outside unsupervised

### LEUKEMIA

- As early as eight weeks old all kittens can receive 2 vaccines three weeks apart
  - Kittens/cats should test negative for feline leukemia and feline AIDS before the vaccine is given
  - Cats should be tested annually because of the possibility of exposure and infection



## POST-VACCINATION INFORMATION

When foreign invaders such as bacteria or viruses enter the body, immune cells called lymphocytes respond by producing protein molecules called, antibodies.

These antibodies' jobs are to eliminate the germs and to protect from future infections. They remain in your bloodstream, and if the same germs ever try to infect your pet again, the antibodies will come to your defense. This is immunity.

Vaccines prepare the immune system to fight disease without exposing it to disease symptoms. Vaccines are made from the same germs that cause the disease; for example, rabies vaccine is made from the rabies virus. The germs in vaccines are either killed or weakened so they will not make you sick.

Vaccines containing these weakened or killed germs are introduced into your pet's system. The immune system reacts to the vaccine in a similar way that it would if it were being invaded by the disease germs, by making antibodies. The antibodies destroy the vaccine germs just as they would the disease germs.

### COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Usually starts within hours of the vaccination
- Usually last for a day or two
  - Discomfort and local swelling at the vaccination site
  - Mild fever
  - Decreased appetite and activity
  - Sneezing
  - Mild coughing
  - Runny nose
  - Other respiratory signs may occur 2-5 days after an intranasal vaccine

### SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS

- May occur within minutes to hours after vaccination
- These reactions can be life-threatening and are medical emergencies
- **SEEK VETERINARY CARE IMMEDIATELY IF ANY OF THESE SIGNS DEVELOP**
  - Vomiting
  - Diarrhea
  - Itchy skin with hives
  - Swelling of the
    - Eyes
    - Face
    - Neck
    - Muzzle
- Pale gums
- Coughing
- Difficulty breathing
- Collapse

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Never hesitate to call our office if any side effects listed are noted **BUT**
- Call our office **IMMEDIATELY** if any serious side effects are noted: **401-943-0500**
- If our office is closed, please call Ocean State Veterinary Specialists: **401-886-6787 (24 hours)**



## PARASITES: RISK AND PREVENTION

Here is a brief listing of some of the parasites and diseases that can affect you and your family, and how they can be prevented

### INTESTINAL PARASITES:

- Dogs and cats are frequently exposed to intestinal parasite eggs and must be on either a monthly preventative or a routine deworming schedule
  - Going outside
  - Sniffing/eating dirt
  - Licking paws
- Intestinal parasites cause
  - Diarrhea
  - Vomiting
  - Dull coat and skin
  - Failure to thrive
- This category of parasites includes:
  - Hookworms
  - Roundworms
  - Whipworms
  - Coccidia
  - Giardia
  - Roundworms and hookworms are a public health concern, because they can cause serious diseases in children, including permanent blindness
  - Decreasing the population of roundworms and hookworms in our pets will also decrease the parasite population in the environment

### HEARTWORM DISEASE:

- Heartworms are tiny worm-like parasites that are transmitted by mosquitoes, travel through the bloodstream, and lodge themselves in the heart and lungs
- They cause clinical signs in dogs that include coughing, lethargy, breathing problems, and heart failure
- Symptoms in the cat can be very vague and may include vomiting, coughing or even sudden death
- Surprisingly, about 25% of the cats that are diagnosed with heartworm are indoor only!
- There are two ways of preventing heartworm disease in dogs and cats.
- One is to give them a monthly heartworm preventative by mouth.
- The other is to apply a topical liquid to their skin once a month.

### FLEAS:

- Fleas are often found on dogs and cats, even if they are indoors the majority of the day
- Fleas are brought in by a friend's dog, a person's shoes or even left on the doormat by a stray cat in the neighborhood
- Once in your house, fleas must be effectively treated on all of your pets and in the environment, prevention is often easier and more economical than treatment
- One effective preventative measure is to use a routine flea-control treatment

\*\*\* Never use a dog flea preventative on a cat. Toxicity occurs very quickly, and can cause seizures and death. We strongly recommend discussing any other flea prevention options with us before use \*\*\*

### TICKS:

- Ticks are a common problem here in New England.
- They are known to carry and transmit lyme disease, anaplasma, ehrlichia and other diseases.
- Annual blood tests can detect exposure to some of these parasites, but prevention of tick bites is key.
- Ticks pose a potential health risk to you, if they are being carried into your house by your dog or cat.
- One effective preventative measure is to use a routine tick-control treatment



## ZOONOTIC DISEASES CATS

Diseases transmitted from animals to humans are called zoonotic diseases. Zoonotic diseases usually live out their complex life cycles in animals, but sometimes cross into human bodies. Zoonosis may be bacterial, viral, or parasitic. Humans are not likely to catch a disease through their pets, but in very rare cases it can happen. Fortunately, most of these diseases are mild and can be easily treated. Others, like toxoplasmosis, can be far more serious.

Pet-owning households with young children, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems need to be aware that their animals can play host to disease-causing microorganisms. Usually contracting a pet-borne disease requires very close contact with animals or their excretions, so zoonotic diseases can be avoided with cleanliness, regular pet examinations and vaccinations.

### HERE ARE SOME COMMON PET-BORNE ILLNESSES THAT CAN MAKE PEOPLE SICK

#### BARTONELLA

- Transmitted by fleas and saliva
  - Bacteria is excreted in flea feces onto the cat's skin/hair coat
    - The cat ingests the bacteria through grooming
      - The bacteria is also found in nail beds due to scratching
    - The bacteria cause "cat-scratch disease" in humans by a cat's
      - Scratch
      - Bite
      - Infected saliva coming in contact with an open wound on a person

#### EXPOSURE

- Any cat can be at risk for exposure at if they are
  - An "outside" cat
  - A stray
  - Adopted from a shelter
  - Coming into contact with an infected cat's saliva during a fight
  - Not on any flea prevention
- We recommend testing all new kittens and cats in a household to prevent possible cases of human infection

#### TOXOPLASMOSIS

- Transmitted to people when they come in contact with infected feces

#### EXPOSURE

- Eating infected
  - Rodents
  - Birds
  - Small animals
- Contact with another cat's infected feces



# CRANSTON ANIMAL HOSPITAL

1119 PARK AVE,  
CRANSTON, RI 02910  
401.943.0770

## **RABIES**

- This is perhaps the most serious of all zoonotic diseases
- Rabies vaccination of dogs and cats is required by state and federal laws
- Rabies is endemic to the United States and is still an active problem in Rhode Island
- Two of the most common species to carry rabies on the East Coast are raccoons and bats
- Feral cats are becoming a particularly notable problem in Rhode Island
- It is transmitted by the saliva of a rabid animal, usually through a bite
- Indoor cats also need to be vaccinated for rabies
  - If a bat came into your house, your cat would be the first one to go after it
- Any dog or cat that is not up-to-date on rabies vaccinations and is bitten by a suspected rabid animal will need to go through quarantine
- Any dog or cat that is not up-to-date on rabies vaccination and bites a person or other animal may need to be euthanized and tested for rabies

## **INTESTINAL PARASITES**

- Intestinal parasites can cause serious, sometimes life-threatening illness in people, especially children
- Children often put their hands in their mouths, providing an easy route for germs/parasite eggs to travel into their bodies
- It is our responsibility to decrease the intestinal parasite population by regularly deworming our pets
- Please see our, Parasite: Risk and Prevention hand-out for more information



## SPAY AND NEUTER YOUR PET

We know that your pet is companion, a friend, and in a real sense a member of your family. In order to reduce the number of animals ending up in shelters or being euthanized, we recommend all cats and dogs be spayed or neutered.

### **FEMALE DOGS AND CATS ARE MATURE ENOUGH TO REPRODUCE STARTING AT THE AGE OF SIX TO NINE MONTHS**

#### **DOGS**

- Go through an estrus (heat cycle) every six months
- This is accompanied by a bleeding cycle (proestrus) prior to the true heat cycle in which she is very receptive to the advances of males
- This heat cycle may last from several days to four weeks
- Often female dogs will experience some personality changes during heat cycles
- Short-tempered
- Anxious

#### **CATS**

- Go through heat every three to four weeks during certain times of the year
- Many female cats will become nervous during these heat cycles and exhibit unusual behaviors such as rolling on the floor, furtively hiding, or wanting constant attention.
- Female cats often become quite vocal, too, meowing plaintively throughout their cycle.

Surgical neutering (spay or ovariectomy) of female dogs and cats, completely eliminates all heat cycles and the accompanying unwanted bleeding cycle, nervousness, and desire to mate. Neutering your female dog or cat will also protect your pet from uterine infections and other diseases as well as difficult or dangerous pregnancies. Studies show that by neutering your female dog before her first heat cycle, you can greatly reduce her chances of developing mammary cancer later in life. The surgery involves the removal of the ovaries and uterus.

Most male dogs and cats are ready and willing to reproduce by the time they are six to 12 months of age. They are able to breed consistently throughout the year. Both male dogs and cats are prone to wander in search of romance and find themselves exposed to dog/cat fights. In addition, male cats are well-known to mark their territories by spraying odorous urine on furniture, walls, shrubs, etc. Male dogs are sometimes equally anxious to mark their territories.

Surgical neutering (castration or orchiectomy) of male dogs and cats, eliminates any reproductive behavior and reduces urine odor and the desire to spray. Your male dog or cat will continue to have his own unique personality. He will be less likely to roam and enjoy staying at home more. The surgery removes the testicles.

Deciding when the best time to neuter your pet is a decision you should discuss with your veterinarian. We typically recommend neutering between 4 and 6 months of age or about 2 weeks after the last of the puppy vaccinations.

Both male and female dogs and cats are mature enough to reproduce starting at the age of six to nine months. Therefore, we recommend neutering between 4 and 6 months of age.





## BRUSHING YOUR PET'S TEETH

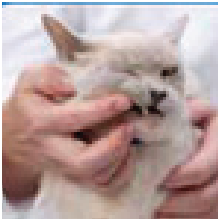
The baby teeth of puppies erupt as early as two weeks. Adult teeth replace these baby teeth by 6 months of age. Once the adult teeth erupt, they should be brushed daily and this is much easier if your pet is already used to having its mouth and teeth handled.

The best time to brush your pet's teeth is when you are both relaxed. Tooth brushing should be introduced slowly, and may even take several days to weeks for you and your pet to adjust. If your pet resists the brushing or shows any other signs of aggression during tooth brushing, stop immediately. Try the brushing process again tomorrow. Please call us for any other pointers we may have.



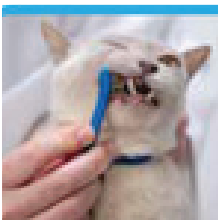
### **FOLLOW THESE STEPS IN ORDER, MOVING ON AS YOUR PET ACCEPTS EACH STEP.**

**1.** Gently position your pet in a corner (of a sofa, chair or room) so that he/she will be secure, comfortable and more easily handled. Carefully lift the lips to expose his/her teeth



**2.** Rub your finger over your pet's teeth and gums for about 15 seconds to get your pet used to having something in his/her mouth. It might be necessary to do this a couple of times before the next step.

**3.** Put a small amount of pet toothpaste on your finger, and allow the pet to taste it. Only use a pet toothpaste



**4.** Place a small amount of pet toothpaste on a finger, brush or piece of gauze over the index finger. Gently rub the brush on the outside of your pet's teeth and gums. Repeat this process for the next few brushing sessions. As soon as your pet begins to accept this, transition to a regular dog or cat toothbrush.



**5.** Apply a small amount of pet toothpaste to a bristle toothbrush specially designed for pets. Place the brush bristles at a 45-degree angle to the gum line. Move the brush gently in circular patterns over your pet's teeth. Start by brushing a few teeth. As brushing sessions continue, slowly include more teeth. Build up to about 30 seconds on each side of the dog's mouth. Remember to brush both upper and lower teeth

**BRUSHING YOUR PET'S TEETH IS THE GOLD STANDARD IN PREVENTING DENTAL DISEASE.**



## TRIMMING YOUR CAT'S NAILS

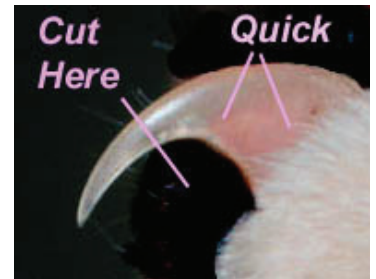
Trimming your cat's nails is not just a part of grooming; it's important for your pet's health as well. Untrimmed nails can cause a variety of problems including broken nails, which are painful and can bleed profusely.

While some cats don't seem to mind when you're trimming their nails, others just plain don't like it. Make trimming time fun and not a struggle. The earlier you start clipping your kitten's nails, the better they will tolerate it in the future. Frequent happy trims when your cat is young will help diminish any fear. If your pet is older and is not used to having their nails trimmed, start slowly and work up to it gradually.

**FOLLOWING THESE SUGGESTIONS FOR A PROPER NAIL TRIM MIGHT HELP YOU GIVE YOUR DOG A MORE PLEASANT PEDICURE**

### LEARN THE ANATOMY

- Within the center of each nail is the blood and nerve supply for the nail called the "quick"
  - This quick will recede if the nails are trimmed regularly
- Most cats have light colored claws nails making the quick easily visualized
  - If your cat has dark nails, just trim off the "hook" of the nail
    - Stay away from the thickest part of the nail
- Cats have a nail on the inner side of each foot called the dew claw. Remember to trim these as



### THE PROPER INSTRUMENTS

- Nail trimmers that are designed for cats
  - There are a variety of nail trimmers available pet stores
    - The guillotine type or a human fingernail clipper are easiest to use in cats
    - The scissors-type is used if a toe nail is so long that it is curling in a circle.
- Styptic powder
  - Stops bleeding if the quick is cut
- Treats
  - Helps to make the process a happy one
- An extra person
  - Helps distract and offer treats





## PROCEDURES

- Trimming
- Cats have retractile claws
- Gently squeeze the toe between your thumb and forefinger to expose the nail
- Determine how much needs to be trimmed
- You want to cut the claw to within approximately 2 millimeters of the quick
- 
- Human nail clipper/Plier type nail trimmer
- The clipper should be placed perpendicular to the nail
- If the trimmer is placed parallel to the nail, the nail is crushed and may splinter
- The sharper the trimmer, the cleaner the cut
- You can use a nail file to smooth the end of the nail after clipping
- Don't forget to trim the dewclaws
- These nails are not worn down when the cat scratches and can grow in a circle and become ingrown
- 
- Guillotine type nail trimmer
- The cutting blade should be facing you
- The screws on the trimmer should be facing the cat
- The nail should be cut from top to bottom
- The tip of the nail is placed in the hole of the trimmer and the handles are squeezed to advance the cutting blade through the nail
- You can use a nail file to smooth the end of the nail after clipping
- Don't forget to trim the dewclaws
- These nails are not worn down when the cat scratches and can grow in a circle and become ingrown
- 
- Cutting into the quick will cause the nail to bleed a small amount
- Applying styptic powder/flour/cornstarch to the quick will stop the bleeding
- Applying a light bandage for about 15 minutes will stop the bleeding
- If the bleeding continues, give us a call



## QUESTIONS FOR CHOOSING AN INSURANCE PROVIDER

### ABOUT THE COMPANY

- How long has the company been in operation?
- Is the coverage provided where I live?
- Is the coverage provided if I travel with my pet?
- Can we utilize any veterinarian hospital?
- Do you offer multi-pet discounts?
- What are your customer service hours?

### ABOUT THE POLICIES

- What are the coverage plan options?
- What are the deductible options?
- How much will my premium increase each year?
- Is it possible to lock in the premium rates so that it doesn't increase?
- Will there be a penalty if I change my plan or deductible?
- Is preapproval of medical services ever required?
- What are the policy limits?
- Is there an annual or lifetime limit for a particular medical problem?
- Will I be able to find out the amount of insurance reimbursement before authorizing my veterinarian to proceed with recommended tests and treatments?
- Is the reimbursement amount for a particular service always the same or does it vary based on the veterinarian's fee?
- Can my pet be dropped from coverage? If so what are the criteria for doing so?

### ABOUT CLAIMS

- What is the process for filing a claim?
- How are claims handled when there is no diagnosis either because tests were not performed or the results are inconclusive?
- How long does it take to receive payment on a claim?
- How are claim disputes handled?
- What is the specific formula for calculating reimbursement claims?
- Is there a benefits schedule or is it based on a percentage of the cost?
- Is there a maximum amount paid per medical event?
- Is there a maximum amount of reimbursement per calendar year?
- Is there a maximum amount of reimbursement per disease?

### WHAT'S INCLUDED AND WHAT'S NOT

- May I see the list of diseases excluded from coverage?
- May I see the list of breed-specific diseases excluded from coverage?
- How much time must pass before a pre-existing condition is finally covered?
- Are complementary and alternative medicine services covered?
- Homeopathy
- Acupuncture
- Acupressure
- Massage therapy
- Chinese herb therapy
- Chiropractic
- Are services associated with breeding, pregnancy, cesarean sections and newborn care covered?
- Are consultations with specialists covered?
- Are second and third opinions covered?
- Is after-hours emergency care covered?
- Are costs associated with treating behavioral issues covered?
- Are costs associated with wellness care and preventative care covered?
- Vaccinations
- Heartworm testing and prevention
- Spaying/ Neutering
- Oral care procedures
- Geriatrics screening
- Tick and Flea prevention
- Microchip implantation
- Deworming