



NEW KITTEN INFORMATION

Getting a new kitten is a very exciting time, whether you're a new owner or just want to make sure you are doing the best for your pet we have put together some useful information.

VACCINATION

Vaccinations are essential for both kittens and adult cats. They protect against a range of diseases that can be very distressing and possibly even fatal. To be fully protected your kitten must receive an initial course of 2 vaccinations 3 weeks apart which are given at 9 weeks old and 12 weeks old. After this your kitten must stay inside for another week until they are fully protected. To remain protected throughout life they must receive an annual booster. At each vaccination your kitten will receive a full health check to make sure they are fit and well. Throughout life the annual vaccination gives a valuable opportunity for the vet to pick up on early signs of problems.

Kittens are vaccinated against the following viruses:

Feline Panleukopenia Virus

Panleukopenia or Feline Infectious Enteritis is a highly contagious viral disease that can be fatal and is seen most severely in kittens. The virus attacks the intestinal cells, bone marrow and lymphoid tissue (tissues which provide the body with defenses against infections). Clinical signs are inappetance, vomiting and diarrhoea and in severe cases can proceed very quickly to death with little warning. In very young kittens the virus can attack the brain and lead to signs such as in coordination and a tremor.

Herpes Virus

This along with calicivirus (see below) causes the respiratory disease complex often referred to as 'Cat flu'. This causes an upper respiratory tract disease and is more commonly seen in kittens and cats in more crowded environments (such as multi-cat households, catteries and animal shelters.) Signs are sneezing, nasal and ocular discharge, inappetance and depression.

Calicivirus

The other component of 'Cat flu', this often causes nasal and ocular discharge, sneezing, fever, ulceration of the mouth and salivation. It can lead to more severe respiratory infections of the lungs and in some cases the virus can infect the joints and the kidneys.

Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV)

This is a very serious disease and is one of the biggest killers of cats. Kittens are again much more susceptible to infection as are cats in more crowded environments. It is spread from affected cats in their saliva. It causes immunosuppression so the body can no longer fight off infections and also causes tumours and anaemia (low red blood cell count). It can also cause enteritis with vomiting and diarrhoea as the clinical signs.

MICROCHIP

We recommend that all cats are micro chipped from an early age. It is devastating for us to find animals that have strayed and be unable to locate their owners and microchips are the easiest solution to this. It is a very simple procedure that involves injecting a tiny microchip (about the size of a grain of rice) into the back of your pet's neck – a bit like a vaccination. It can be done conscious, is very quick and almost pain free.

DIET

Diet is one of the most important considerations for your new kitten. We wouldn't recommend changing your kitten's food straight away, as there are a lot of changes to adapt to in his/her new home. However, you may find another diet more suitable or just simply easier for you to obtain. We recommend a good quality, complete wet or dry kitten food. Some of the diets that our vets feed their own pets are Hills Vet Essentials, James Well Beloved and Burns, but please speak to your vet about what diet may suit your kitten best. Remember your kitten will need feeding 3-4 times daily up until about 4-6 months depending on size.

INSURANCE

We strongly recommend that all kittens are insured with a reputable pet insurance company. Something as simple as a fall or itchy skin can end up costing you thousands of pounds in vet's bills. With the increasing advances in veterinary knowledge and care available, we are able to offer advanced diagnostic tests, treatments and surgeries. Sometimes this may include referral to a specialist facility if we are unable to adequately treat your pet at Farthings. Insurance helps you to cover these costs and takes away those difficult decisions so you don't have to compromise your pet's care.

There are many different companies offering pet insurance, and we would urge you to carefully consider the options before selecting your policy. Always read the small print, and check what level of cover you will be getting. We advise a policy that covers your pet for life, so that if they are diagnosed with a condition that requires lifelong medication, this is all covered by your insurance company. Examples of these conditions are diabetes, heart disease and thyroid disorders but there are many more. Some insurance policies only cover you up to a limited amount, or for a set period of time, which can leave you facing vets bills alone.

Remember, once an animal has had a condition or symptom noted by the vet, it can be very difficult to get this covered by insurance, so the sooner you insure your pet the better. At Farthings we offer one month's free pet insurance with PetPlan, so please ask about this at your next visit.

WORMING

Kittens need regular protection against intestinal roundworms (*Toxocara felis*, *Toxascaris leonina*), tapeworms (*Taenia spp*, *Dipylidium caninum*, *Echinococcus spp.*), whipworms (*Trichuris vulpis*), hookworms (*Ancylostoma caninum*, *Uncinaria spp*), and lungworm (*Aelurostrongylus abstrusus*).

Your kitten should have been wormed by your breeder regularly from 2 weeks old. We then recommend that you worm your pet again with Panacur® liquid, paste or granules daily for 3 consecutive days at 8 weeks old. We can discuss this with you in detail at your first vaccination appointment.

At 12 weeks, we then recommend that you move onto Drontal® worming tablets or Profender® spot on wormer every 3 months (based on your pet's weight). This continues into adulthood.

NEUTERING

We recommend neutering of both male and female cats at 5-6 months old. For male cats the advantages are that he should not stray far away like an unneutered tom cat will, he will be much less likely to get into fights which can lead to nasty injuries and frequent trips to the vets. It also stops unwanted behavioural traits such as spraying urine in your house.

For female cats there are medical benefits as it eliminates the chance of getting potentially fatal uterine diseases and also prevents unwanted pregnancies. Having a litter of kittens may sound like a nice idea but it has considerable risks for your cat. With already hundreds of stray cats and kittens in the country looking for homes new litters can end up homeless and fending for themselves.