

# BELLARINE

VETERINARY PRACTICE  
— ANIMAL HOSPITAL —



## KITTEN CARE

Cats and kittens are unique animals and make excellent pets. Their independent natures are a source of entertainment for many people. They can be very affectionate companions and because they are so easy to care for they make ideal pets.

Bringing home a new kitten is an exciting time for everyone in the household. This little bundle of fluff will entertain you as it plays around your house and garden. Even the most simple of items can entertain your kitten for hours on end. Items such as paper bags, ping pong balls, boxes and screwed up newspapers are ideal.

It is true to say that a kitten takes much less work than a puppy to care for. They generally don't need much toilet training and as a rule they need less time spent on exercising and coat care (except long haired breeds). However, there are still important factors to consider to ensure your kitten gets a good start in life.

## **TOILET TRAINING**

Cats are naturally very clean animals and most mother cats (queens) teach their kittens tidy toilet behaviour while they are very young. All you have to do is provide a litter tray and most kittens will automatically use it.

Keep the litter tray in a private area and clean it daily, some cats will only use it once and then they'll hold on until the litter has been changed! In some cases, it can be a good idea to have two litter trays. Many cats choose to urinate down drain holes ie. the bath and shower and in some cases they use the toilet! Some cats have a preference for a certain type of litter. Try several types to find the one your cat prefers.

## **VACCINATION**

Kittens are routinely vaccinated against two viral disease syndromes.

1. Feline Enteritis – a severe, often fatal, viral disease that causes sudden depression, fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, dehydration and ultimately death.
2. Feline Upper Respiratory Disease (Cat Flu)– the vaccine protects against the diseases caused by two viruses Herpes virus and Calicivirus. Signs of disease include sneezing, nasal discharge, conjunctivitis, mouth ulcers, coughing and in severe cases, dehydration and pneumonia.

If unvaccinated, these viruses have the potential to kill a kitten. Vaccination protects your kitten against developing severe disease from the viruses.

## **OUR RECOMMENDED VACCINATION PROGRAM**

6-8 weeks: F3I (feline enteritis & Cat Flu)

12-14 weeks: F3I

16 weeks: F3I

And an ANNUAL BOOSTER.

### **Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV)**

A vaccine is now available for Feline Leukaemia Virus. This virus is shed from saliva of infected cats and requires close contact for spreading. If infected, the cat can become very sick as the disease affects the immune system. Eventually it can kill the cat. Cats in multicat households and those that have outdoor access are at risk of both FeLV and FIV.

### **Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)**

A vaccine is now available for FIV, the cat form of HIV. FIV, like FeLV, is transmitted via saliva, namely via cat bite wounds. Annual boosters are imperative in sustaining protection and mature cats must have a blood test before vaccination. FIV suppresses the immune system and makes recovery from other diseases more difficult. It is prudent to vaccinate cats that may get into fights for FIV.

### **Chlamydia**

A vaccination is available – Chlamydia causes a severe conjunctivitis. Vaccination helps decrease the severity of the disease.

Discuss with your vet the risk to your cat from these other viruses. Most cats only require the core vaccinations, but at risk cats should have additional vaccines.

## **DENTAL CARE**

Cats clean their teeth by chewing. To maintain beautiful teeth like they have when they are young, it is important to encourage your cat to chew. A raw chicken wing or neck twice weekly is ideal. If your cat isn't interested in these, a special dry food teeth diet is available.

## **DESEXING**

Female cats are spayed and male cats are castrated around 6 months of age. They can be done earlier or later on request.

## WORMING:

**ROUNDWORMS:** Occur in most kittens and can cause severe illness such as vomiting, diarrhoea, weight loss, pot belly and failure to thrive. Kittens can be infected via the mother's milk. These worms are easy to recognize: they are large and look just like spaghetti.

**HOOKWORMS:** are less common but can cause serious disease because the adults suck blood from the cat's intestine, leading to anaemia, weakness and depression.

**TAPEWORMS:** generally occur in older cats (4 months onwards) and are easily recognized as small white segments around the bottom. Tapeworms are carried by fleas, rodents and lizards which increase the risk of being infected if they have fleas or hunt.

## RECOMMENDED WORMING PROGRAM:

2, 4, 6, 8,10 and 12 weeks of age – Felex paste or Drontal tablets

4, 5 and 6 months – Felex paste or Drontal tablets

Then every 3 – 4 months – Felex paste or Drontal tablets

## WHAT TO FEED?

Cats are essentially carnivores (meat eaters) with a higher requirement of protein and fats than dogs.

A diet of straight meat however, is not essentially balanced. Kittens have higher calcium requirements than adult cats.

The best diet for your cat is a good quality commercial cat food, eg Eukanuba or Advance especially formulated kitten food as their nutritional requirements are different to adult cats. Dry or canned food, or a mixture of both is fine. Fresh water should always be available.

## WHEN TO FEED?

6-12 Weeks: feed up to 4 times daily

3-9 months: feed kitten twice daily

9 months onwards: feed adult ration once daily or divide into 2 meals

There are guidelines on commercial pet food packaging on how much to feed daily. Some cats prefer eating lots of little snacks throughout the day. This is fine as long as you don't continually top up the food bowl as it will allow your cat to become over weight.

## **BEDDING:**

A young kitten needs a warm dry place to sleep. A basket or box with a blanket or rug is ideal. Remember to clean this area regularly so that it doesn't become a breeding haven for fleas.

It is strongly advised to keep all cats indoors at night as this is the time that they're most likely to hunt, roam and get hit by cars. Keep your kitten indoors (i.e house, garage, shed or purpose built cattery) all the time until it is at least four months old. Only allow it outside before this age if you're there to supervise it.

Once your kitten is 4-6 months old you can start leaving it outside unsupervised for short periods during the day. Do this before meal time so your kitten has a good incentive to come home when you call it. Once your kitten is desexed you can leave it outdoors for longer periods during the day (i.e. while you are at work) but always lock your cat indoors at sundown until after sunrise the next day.

## **EXERCISE, ENTERTAINMENT & TRAINING:**

Kittens and cats can be sources of hours of entertainment as they burn up their energy playing. There are lots of simple toys that will entertain your cats for hours such as champagne corks, a cardboard box, a paper bag, or a toy mouse on a piece of elastic. Scratching posts are useful in saving your furniture and letting your cat pedicure his/her nails.

Although not quite in the same league as dogs, cats can be trained. Food is an ideal bribe to get them to come when called. It is also important that they get exposed to many different experiences as kittens, so they grow to trust their owner and be relaxed in different situations. Some cats we see can develop behavioural disorders. Some of these can be avoided by introducing kittens to other animals, people and events.

## **GROOMING, BATHING AND FLEA CONTROL**

Generally cats and kittens are clean creatures and little needs to be done. You can bath your cat if you wish to. It is a good idea to get them used to this when they are kittens. Long haired cats require grooming to prevent hair balls and knots. Once again get them used to it when they are kittens by giving food rewards and attention.

Fleas are nasty parasites that bite cat's skin and suck blood. These bites make the cat very itchy which often shows up as over grooming rather than scratching. Fleas are easily controlled with Advantage or Frontline (depending on the age of your kitten).

Many of us at Bellarine Vet Practice have our own cats and can relate to the delightful "although sometimes strange" characteristics of these remarkable animals. If you would like to know more about raising a kitten and owning a cat please contact us.



## **MICROCHIPPING**

Microchips can be inserted under the skin on your cats neck. These chips are a permanent identification tool for your cat. All vet clinics, council rangers and lost dog homes have scanners which can detect microchips and hence locate a cats owner within a few minutes. There is an initial insertion fee which also includes subscription to Central Animal Records for the life of your cat. Microchipping is compulsory for all pets from 3 months old when registration is due. It can be done in a routine consultation.

## **PET INSURANCE**

Having a pet is a wonderful experience but sometimes accidents can occur. For these times it can be useful to have pet insurance. Accidents can be expensive and pet insurance can help to pay for these costs. Some insurance policies also have other things covered such as holiday cancellation, kennel fees and the like. There are many pet insurance agencies and different policies have different benefits. It is a good idea to research them yourself and find one that is suitable for what you want. Be aware of breed exclusions and if you have any questions that we may be able to answer we are happy to help. Don't forget to check your house insurance as they sometimes have a pet insurance option.

**Pet Insurance is available through Vet's Own, Pet Plan, Bow Wow Meow, RSPCA, PetCover, Manchester Unity & Oz Pet.**

### **Below is a table of approximate costs of common problems with dogs and cats**

Broken leg pinning	\$1500 - \$1800
Lump removal	\$350 - \$700
Snail bait poisoning	\$350 - \$1200
Skin infections	\$90 - \$150
Gastric volvulus (twisted stomach)	\$1800 - \$2300
Abscess - Surgically drained	\$250-\$350
Severe gastroenteritis (eg salmonella)	\$600-\$1500
Cruciate ligament rupture	\$900 - \$2500
Bone plating	\$2500 - \$3500

**CURRENT AS AT MAY 2008**

## **CARE CREDIT**

If you don't have pet insurance but find yourself in a money predicament with a sick pet, then Care Credit may be an option for you. It is financed through GE Money and can offer you short term interest free loans. Application is on-line and processing is quite quick. Applicants need to be working to be approved.



# Tails and Whiskas Club

Our Tails and Whiskas Club entitles you to \*10%\* off all retail merchandise (flea control, worming treatment, cages, collars etc) and; \*5%\* off all food purchased. It is renewable annually and covers all the pets in your household.

## WEB SITE

If you would like more information about us or what we do then visit our web site :  
[www.bellvet.com.au](http://www.bellvet.com.au)

## VET NOTES



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