

Adult Cat Healthcare



This healthcare sheet on adult cats will help you to formulate a good healthcare routine for your pet cat. Included is some information on cat diseases and vaccination, internal and external parasites and the treatment for these, microchipping, neutering, diet, dental care and healthcare insurance.

Vaccination

Why should my pet be vaccinated and how does the vaccination work?

Vaccinations are given to our pets to prevent them contracting well known and feared infections with various viruses and bacteria that may otherwise prove fatal.

Prevention is better than cure!!!

Vaccination is the way we stimulate an animals' immune system to become resistant, or immune, to particular infections. A vaccination consists of part of a modified or killed virus or bacterium.

It is prepared in such a way that the body's defences recognise it as a threat and react as if it were a real infection by producing antibodies. This process takes time though so the purpose of vaccination is to prepare the immune system so that if ever exposed to the real infection the antibodies are already on hand to start fighting the infection straight away.

The body needs to be reminded of its enemies from time to time as antibody levels decrease over time so to keep these levels up to a level that will prevent infection we booster this immunity with a booster vaccination.

Diseases that we commonly vaccinate against

1. Cat Flu

Runny eyes, sneezing, anorexia, eye ulcers, mouth ulcers, loosing weight and ill-thrift are some of the signs we associate with cat flu. Can cause loss of an eye if an ulcer causes perforation of the cornea or sometimes death as young animals will often become debilitated and dehydrated.

2. Feline Enteritis

A viral disease that causes a horrible debilitating diarrhoea and immune system depression –can often cause death in young animals.

3. Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV)

A Viral disease that is spread through mating, biting/fighting and even sharing food bowls. This disease causes depression of the immune system in young –middle aged cats. It is considered to be a 'young cats' AIDS' as the virus allows the cats immune defences to be lowered and allow opportunistic infections to occur when a normal healthy animal would fight them off. It is also associated with intestinal tumours. This will eventually lead to the demise and death of the cat involved. Once infected a cat is a threat to all its local cohorts.

We cannot yet vaccinate against Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) – the cat version of HIV. This is a disease spread by mating, biting/fighting and sharing food bowls.

We strongly recommend neutering your cat as this reduces the chances of being infected with FeLV and FIV greatly as there is no mating post neutering and biting/fighting is greatly reduced.

Please contact us for advice on vaccinations and a health certificate for your pet.

Parasites

Essentially there are two types of parasites – those that live externally on the cat - fleas, ticks, lice and mites and those that live internally in the cat intestine – different types of worms. Both types can generally be effectively treated but

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1. External Parasites

Fleas, especially with the increasingly warmer temperatures, are becoming a year round occurrence. They are responsible for causing a range of problems in pets.

Fleas are common-place and no pet is above coming home with one every once in a while. Unfortunately one becomes many very quickly and an infestation of not only your pet but your house ensues.

Fleas have a lifecycle rather like a butterfly except the end product, unlike the butterfly, is unfortunately not a welcome visitor.

Adult fleas lay their eggs in the house and favour carpets, upholstery, bedding, skirting boards etc...

Which also means that treating your pet is sometimes not enough if the infestation is advanced.

Larvae hatch from these eggs and after a period of hibernation turn into juvenile fleas which also occasionally like to try us out for a meal.

If that is not enough to make you squirm, fleas also carry tapeworms – so if your pet has fleas, they will also likely be infested with tapeworms which occasionally like to make an appearance around the animal's tail and bottom looking something akin to a crawling rice grain.

Some animals develop an allergic reaction to flea saliva and one bite can set this reaction off resulting in a very itchy, uncomfortable and often scabby or baldy pet.

Other external parasites include –

Ticks - (grey/cream coloured raisin sized insects) that attach themselves to the skin by digging their mouth parts deep into your pets skin to allow constant feeding. These critters feed until they are full with blood and then fall off now full of enough nourishment for a full batch of eggs.

Lice - are much smaller and difficult to see, often affect younger animals and cause scratching and are associated with general ill-thrift and bad health.

Mites – there are a number of different types of mites seen commonly in Ireland and each one is specially designed to live in a specific area such as ears or skin. These little fellows are small but dig deep into the skin – to cause mange, or ear to cause infections.

Modern parasitic treatments are highly effective for both treating and preventing infestations when the correct treatment is used and applied properly.

These treatments are applied easily to the skin in one place – often at the back of the neck and will protect the entire animal for up to 4 weeks.

There are different types of treatments available and the one best suited to your pet can depend on your pets habits, their surroundings and history.

Please contact us to ask our advice for the treatment best suited to your pet.

2. Internal Parasites

Worms

There are many types of worms and internal parasites. Most animals, unless strictly wormed during all stages of their life, will have a small worm burden constantly or intermittently. It is not in the worms' best interest to cause debilitating illness to its very hospitable host so healthy animals can have worms

without any outward signs of such. You will only see worms if your animal is heavily infested; so not seeing them **DOES NOT MEAN** they are not there.

Worms can be fatal in young animals when the number of them present overwhelms what their bodies can put up with or can physically cause blockage of the intestines.

It is now thought that cat roundworms may also pose a human health risk similar to that of dog roundworms that can cause eye, heart or brain damage in humans but especially children. It is very important to worm your pets regularly – usually at three month intervals – with an effective drug to kill roundworms and other internal parasites.

Tapeworms are transmitted by fleas and also caught by eating mice or rabbits. So, feline hunters need to be wormed more regularly.

Please contact us to ask which wormer is best for your pet.

Microchipping

Microchipping your pet means in the unfortunate event of your pet going missing, the chances of having them returned to you are greatly increased.

Collars can be removed or lost, but microchips are a permanent means of identification.

Microchipping is a simple procedure involving the placement of an electronic chip (about the size of a rice grain) under the skin at the back of your pet's neck. Once inserted the chip it is there for life and does not malfunction once checked initially.

Veterinary clinics, dog warden and animal welfare organisations routinely 'scan' stray animals for microchips. If the animal is microchipped, the chip number appears on the scanner and the owners name and details can be retrieved in minutes. Then all it takes is a phone call to let you know that your pet is well and can be collected.

It is now obligatory that all kennel club registered dogs are microchipped.

Please contact us for further information.



Neutering

If there is anything that cats are innately good at it's getting pregnant. Unfortunately this means that our stray population continues to grow and that a large number of unwanted animals are destroyed every year. If you do not intend to breed from your pet the responsible thing to do is to neuter them. This also has many other health-related advantages listed below.

1. Neutering of your Female Cat

Neutering a female animal is referred to as "spaying". Spaying or *ovariohysterectomy* involves removal of the womb and ovaries to prevent 'heats' and unwanted pregnancies in a female cat as well as other undesirable diseases, such as those described below. The reproductive cycle of a cat means that they can come into heat 6-8 times a year.

Other advantages of spaying your female cat are – *Pyometra* or womb infection. This is a life-threatening condition in dogs and cats in which the womb gradually fills up with pus which leads to a form of blood poisoning/septicaemia. Death or kidney failure is possible consequences of this disease.

Breast cancer / mammary *neoplasia*, this is a more uncommon condition in cats but when it is seen it tends to be of a more aggressive nature. This condition, which usually requires surgery to remove the mass and reduce the risk of spread, may be life threatening.

A lot of mouths to feed! One unspeyed female cat can turn into 16+ kittens a year! Not spaying your animal may become an expensive choice.

2. Neutering your Male Cat

This will mean that you will see your vet much less often!!! Entire, or unneutered, cats have a tendency to fight with other male cats and thus get cat fight abscesses, lacerations and unfortunately horrible cat viruses such as *Feline Immunodeficiency Virus* (FIV) or *Feline Leukaemia Virus* (Felv) both of which are often life-threatening. Neutering your male cat also prevents antisocial behaviour such as urine spraying and roaming.

Spaying or neutering your cat means that the chances of becoming infected with Feline Leukaemia virus or Feline Aids are much reduced. They would no longer mate and their inclination for fighting reduces so by reducing or removing the social behaviour that allows

infection we manage to help control these fatal diseases also.

Diet

All species have their own specific requirement. Did you know that dogs can eat cat food; however cats not eating a specifically formulated cat food may go blind!

Besides species specific requirements, there are lots of variations within a species. Cats and dogs come in lots of different shapes, sizes, ages and health states. Diets are often specifically tailored to suit specific needs, be it LIFESTAGE (e.g. kitten) or medically dictated such as a special kidney friendly diet in an older cat with kidney disease.

Please contact us for specific advice to suit your pet.

Dental Healthcare

Cats are notoriously fussy when it comes to food and they usually prefer the type of food that is worst for their dental health. Soft food with gravies and jellies often means that as a cat ages their teeth develop hard calculus – calcified plaque. This is effectively a layer of hard material that adheres to the outside of the tooth and creeps up under the gum line which will cause loosening of the tooth, infection and eventually loss of the tooth after considerable discomfort. Layers build up on layers and a tooth can be completely covered in calculus with considerable damage to the gums and exposure of the roots of the tooth.

Dental treatment involving a short anaesthetic and descale (removal of the calculus with ultrasonic equipment to break it up into little pieces) and then polishing the tooth to make it difficult for plaque to re-adhere to the tooth surface is often what's necessary to treat affected teeth.

We can try to reduce the build up of tartar/calculus by feeding a specific tooth – friendly diet and if you're feeling very brave you could even try brushing but unfortunately most cats don't tolerate this very well!

Healthcare Insurance

Having a sick pet is worrying enough. At least with pet insurance you do not have to worry about the money aspect!

As veterinary medicine is an evolving science, we are always updating or improving diagnostic and treatment services. Thus the possibilities for treating



animals start to mirror what is done in human medicine. It is not unusual these days for a dog to have cataract surgery or a cat to have skin graft.

We recommend taking out pet insurance when your pet is at a young age and healthy as there are age and pre-existing disease limitations.

For further information or advice please do not hesitate to contact us.

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opening hours

Monday, Wednesday & Friday
8.30am–6.00pm

Tuesday & Thursday
8.30am–7.00pm

Saturday
10.00am–12.00 noon

clinic hours

Monday–Friday
9.00–11.00am

Monday, Wednesday & Friday
3.00–6.00pm

Tuesday & Thursday
4.00–7.00pm

Saturday
10.00am–12.00 noon

Consultation by appointment only



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We always want to do the best for our animals and give them the best and newest treatment options available. However, we do not always want the costs ensued by these cutting edge procedures.

Pet insurance therefore cannot be recommended often enough. Similar to human schemes your pet insurance covers situations when your animal is ill, may need a medical work-up, surgery or specialist referral.