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Kitten Information Guide

Congratulations on your new kitten! Although it is a very exciting time, we realize that new kitten owners have many questions. We have put together a **Kitten Information Guide** to help get you off to a good start.

Included are some basic tips on:

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For further information on anything concerning your kitten, please do not hesitate to contact any one of our knowledgeable staff here at Landing Animal Clinic.

Vaccinating Your Kitten

When kittens are born, their immune systems are not mature enough to make antibodies. Nature provides for temporary immunity in the form of colostrum (milk from the mother), which is very rich in antibodies. It is variable when a kitten develops the ability to form their own antibodies. As a result, it is VERY important they receive the full series of vaccines at 8 weeks, 12 weeks and 16 weeks.

We recommend the following vaccine schedule:

First visit - 8 weeks old:

- Feline Distemper (Panleukopenia), Rhinotracheitis, and Calicivirus combination
 - (first of three)

Second visit - 12 weeks olds:

- Feline Distemper (Panleukopenia), Rhinotracheitis, and Calicivirus combination
 - (second of three)
- Feline leukemia (for cats that may go outdoors)
 - (first of two)

Third visit - 16 weeks old:

- Feline Distemper (Panleukopenia), Rhinotracheitis and Calicivirus combination
 - (third of three)
- Feline leukemia (for cats that may go outdoors)
 - (second of two)
- Rabies

A few comments about vaccines:

1. A kitten is not fully vaccinated until they have had the FULL series ending at 16 weeks.
2. At each kitten vaccination visit, we will perform a full physical examination. When kittens are growing rapidly, things can change from month to month. For example, we might hear a heart murmur at one visit, but not at a subsequent visit. Many other items are discussed at these visits such as litterbox training, tooth eruption, training or temperament issues.
3. Your pet needs to be vaccinated for rabies to enter the United States. **Please advise us if you are planning on travelling to the United States with your kitten.** The rabies vaccine is licensed for cats 12 weeks of age and older. If your cat or kitten is being vaccinated against rabies for the first time, you must wait 30 days before bringing them into the United States.

4. Adverse reactions to vaccines are very rare. Some pets will be a bit lethargic or seem tired the day following the vaccines. Some pets will be painful over the site of the vaccine. Please call us if you think your pet is painful and we will prescribe medication for the pain. If you notice an unlikely severe allergic reaction (such as hives, vomiting, swollen face), please call a veterinarian right away. If we are closed, please call an emergency clinic.
5. **If your kitten was first vaccinated at less than 8 weeks of age**, we will likely recommend 3 more kitten vaccines in their series. It is very important that the last vaccine for feline distemper, rhinotracheitis, and calicivirus be given at 16 weeks of age. Stopping too early may leave them susceptible to the disease.

Deworming your Kitten

Your new kitten will be dewormed several times. This is important to protect your pet against internal parasites. Internal parasites are very common in kittens, and kittens usually acquire them from their mother. It is particularly important to deworm your kitten or cat in households where there are small children or immunosuppressed adults (adults receiving chemotherapy, adults with autoimmune diseases or the elderly). Occasionally worms can be transmitted between cats and people. Children and immunosuppressed people are more susceptible to this.

Nail Trims

1. Clip your kitten's nails frequently (usually every 4-6 weeks). Kitten nails can become very sharp. If you keep them short you can avoid some unwanted scratching and climbing.
2. Cat nail trimmers are easier to use than human nail trimmers. You can purchase cat nail trimmers at a pet store, or we would be happy to order some for you.
3. Hold the paw gently but firmly, and press on the nail from the top. This will help the nail stick out and make it easier for you to trim. Be careful not to cut into the "quick", the sensitive flesh underneath the back of the nail. Should you accidentally cut too far back and bleeding occurs, use baby powder or flour to help stop the bleeding (it can take quite awhile!).
4. Don't try to trim all the nails in one sitting. Pick a time when your kitten is tired and quiet, and trim the nails on one foot only.
5. Be sure to reward your kitten if they accept the nails being trimmed quietly.
6. If you have never trimmed a kitten's nails before, let us show you how. You are also welcome to watch a video (see the link below).
7. If you would rather leave the nail trimming to a groomer or veterinary technician, it is still important to handle your kitten's feet often and get them used to the cat

carrier that they will be transported in for the nail trims. If the kitten has never had their feet handled before, then they may get very stressed during the nail trim procedure. If they are not used to travelling in a carrier, they can find that stressful as well.

Below is a link to a YouTube video from Vet Vid on how to trim your cat's nails:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99PtaQQbBIY>

Environmental Enrichment

At Landing Animal Clinic, we believe that indoor cats can have very good quality of life as long as their environment offers a variety of resources spread throughout the home. Resources include watering and feeding sites, elimination sites, scratching sites, resting/perching sites, toys and play activities.

Scratching Behavior:

1. Scratching is a normal behavior. Scratching behavior in cats appears to fulfill multiple functions, including leaving a visual and scent mark on objects, conditioning the claws, stretching the body, and exercising the muscles and tendons involved in claw usage.
2. Our goal is to give them appropriate places to scratch and prevent them from damaging items in your home.
3. Cats usually prefer to scratch in prominent locations or pathways in the home. To encourage use of a scratching post, the post should be located where people and the cat spend their time. In some cases another post should also be located close to where the cat normally sleeps because, as mentioned earlier, many cats will scratch upon awakening.
4. A cat may use a horizontal or vertical object to scratch; some cats prefer one or the other, while some prefer both. With vertical objects, it is important that they have enough space to fully stretch their front legs in a standing position. It is important that the material allows them to get a good hold with their nails.
5. Make areas where the cat has previously scratched less desirable by covering the spots with plastic, other fabric, or double-sided tape.
6. Reward cats for using scratching posts with treats and/or attention.

Additional Environmental Enrichment Ideas:

1. Sensory enrichment. This can include toys enhanced with catnip, toys that squeak, radio or television. There are even videos and computerized games for cats!
2. Feeding – feeding can be delivered in a variety of creative ways to stimulate hunting behavior. These could include such things as food tossing sessions, puzzle toys that dispense food kibble, stashing food in small quantities around the house.
3. Toys – it is a good idea to rotate the toys to help increase their novelty and interest.
4. Play – Toys and games should encourage natural cat behaviors. Hands, fingers and toes should not be used to encourage play. Toys that dangle from a string that sway and bounce when swatted are good choices for some cats. Battery operated toys are another option.
5. Multi-level resting areas, cardboard boxes, paper bags, perches near the window in a sunny spot, kitty condos can all be used to help meet their needs

Spaying and Neutering

Cats become sexually mature after about six months of age. Females also begin their reproductive cycles at this age. This cycle involves recurrent periods of heat, or estrus, during which males are attracted from great distances by an odor coming from the females. It is only during heat that females will accept a male. Once they reach sexual maturity, the heat cycle is almost continuous in cats that are not spayed, until they mate (which induces ovulation) or they are spayed. Often female cats are very obnoxious during this time and vocalize frequently.

Ovariohysterectomy (Spay) Females

The surgery is performed under sterile operating room conditions with the animal under a general anesthetic, and involves the removal of the ovaries, fallopian tubes, and uterus (womb) through an abdominal incision. After this operation, the female will not come into heat, and will have neither the interest nor the capacity to breed. There is NO ADVANTAGE in waiting for the female to have a heat cycle or litter before being spayed. Apart from sexual activity, spaying has no effect on a female's temperament.

Advantages of Ovariohysterectomy:

1. Males are not attracted to your property
2. Less tendency to wander from home
3. Less tendency to vocalize consistently

4. No unwanted pregnancies, thus contributing to the control of the pet population and the problem of unwanted litters
5. No reproductive problems later in life, such as uterine infections or birth complications
6. Reduced rate licensing after spaying

Orchyectomy (Neuter) Males

This operation involves removing the testicles, thereby eliminating the source of sperm and male hormones. It is routinely recommended for all male cats that are not intended for breeding purposes. Neutering can help control wandering, aggressiveness, and excessive territorial marking with urine.

Questions to ask about your pet's spay or neuter surgery

Unless being used for breeding, we strongly recommend that all dogs and cats be spayed or neutered. These procedures are major surgical interventions that should never be taken lightly. That being said, with proper attention to technique, anesthetic monitoring and pain management, pets typically handle these procedures with minimal stress or complications. Prices for these procedures vary considerably from clinic to clinic, so we would like to suggest several questions that should be posed to a clinic when a cost estimate for the price of a spay or neuter is obtained. For your convenience, the answers to each of these questions from Landing Animal Clinic are provided. Don't hesitate to contact us if you have any additional questions.

Q. Are fluids administered to my pet?

A. At Landing Animal Clinic all patients are given fluids during their surgical procedure. We do not think this should be optional as these fluids help to support your pet's blood pressure while anesthetized. When used, intravenous fluids allow for quick intravenous access for the administration of various medications if needed during the procedure. Fluid administration also allows us to optimize your pet's pain medications during the surgery.

Q. Who monitors my pet while they are anesthetized?

A. Though the surgery is performed by a veterinarian who also supervises your pet's anesthesia, at Landing Animal Clinic we also have several Registered Veterinary Technologists (RVT – a licensed “veterinary nurse” who is a graduate of a two year college program), one of whom is dedicated to continuously monitoring your pet while

they are anesthetized. It is very important that your pet is monitored by a RVT. This maximizes the safety of the procedure as the RVT is superbly trained to monitor for any changes in the pet's well-being while anesthetized as well as in the post-operative period. We are proud of our excellent record of anesthesia safety.

Q. What anesthetic monitoring equipment is utilized?

A. The level of monitoring and monitoring equipment varies greatly between clinics. At Landing Animal Clinic we are proud to utilize some of the most modern monitoring equipment, including constant monitoring of ventilation (breathing) status via capnography. We also continuously monitor your pet's blood pressure, heart rate, blood oxygenation and body temperature.

Q. How is pain managed?

A. Surgical intervention is painful, so at Landing Animal Clinic we use multi-modal pain management methods to maximize your pet's comfort level. Our multi-modal approach includes pre and post-op pain medication as well as local anesthetic. We want your pet to be as comfortable as possible.

Q. Why do we recommend permanent identification for your pet?

A. On average, 30% of pets are lost from home at least once in their lifetime. Our goal is to increase your chances of finding your pet if this ever happens. Collars with tags are very helpful but can be removed or torn off. There are two forms of permanent identification available for your pet: tattoos and microchips. Ideally, your pet would have both.

Tattoos:

- This is a letter-number sequence that is put in your pet's right ear while they are under general anesthesia
- The tattoo number is traced back to Landing Animal Clinic, so it is important that you keep your contact information current with Landing Animal Clinic.
- Tattoos are only useful for pets remaining in the local area (Calgary) and can only be traced during regular clinic business hours.

Microchips:

- This is the size of a grain of rice and is implanted under the skin between the shoulder blades using a needle.
- The microchip number is connected to an electronic database with your contact information. The microchip is not a GPS device.

- A staff member at a veterinary clinic or animal shelter is able to scan the microchip and contact the microchip company for your contact information.
 - Microchips can be traced internationally at any time of day.

With both forms of identification, it is very important that you **keep your contact information up to date** so that your pet can be traced back to you if needed.

City Cat License

Cats 3 months of age and older in the city of Calgary must be licensed. Kittens under 6 months of age, and spayed/neutered cats qualify for a reduced license fee. To qualify for the reduced rate, you are required to provide a copy of the “spay/neuter certificate”. Cat Licenses can be paid for by telephone, through the mail, in person, online, or through your bank’s internet or telephone banking.

For general information:

<http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/ABS/Pages/Animal-Services/Licensing-cat-dog.aspx>

Travelling with your Kitten to the Vet Clinic:

We want your kitten to enjoy coming to the veterinary clinic now and in the years to come! One of the biggest hurdles is getting your kitten comfortable with the cat carrier. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Make the carrier a familiar place at home by leaving it in a room where your kitten spends a lot of time.
2. Place soft bedding inside the carrier. It is helpful if the bedding has the scent of something familiar on it.
3. Give the kitten treats in the cat carrier. You can also place catnip, or toys inside the carrier. This helps them associate the crate with something positive.
4. A carrier that you can easily remove the top is a good idea. This will give your kitten a familiar space to sit in during the veterinary exam. We want to avoid “dumping” or forcing them out of the cat carrier when you arrive.
5. Consider putting a blanket over the cat carrier to reduce the amount of sensory stimulation during the journey to the clinic. Make sure that there is still adequate ventilation.

6. Consider a synthetic feline pheromone (e.g. Feliway). If you spray the kennel 30 minutes before transport, this can help calm the cat.

Helpful Suggestions for Feeding Your Kitten

Good feeding habits start as soon as you get your kitten. Your kitten's diet will influence its health status, development, appearance and attitude. Kittens grow rapidly for the first few months and need extra, yet balanced, sources of nutrients during this growth phase. Excesses, deficiencies, and imbalances of certain dietary nutrients can predispose your kitten to many problems later in life. It is also important to prevent your kitten from gaining too much weight. Being overweight as a kitten can predispose him or her to obesity and obesity-associated health problems later in life. The following tips will get you off to a good start:

1. Choose your kitten's diet carefully!

It is important that you feed your **kitten a diet formulated for growth** (a kitten diet, NOT an all stages diet).

2. There is excessive misinformation in the market regarding pet foods. It can get very frustrating for an owner that just wants to pick a healthy diet for their kitten! **Please don't hesitate to call and ask about any issues you may have regarding your kitten's diet** - we are not interested in selling you food you don't need. We are interested in your kitten's health and well-being, and helping you understand the differences in food, and how they impact your kitten.

3. Do not "free choice feed" your kitten.

Free choice feeding is feeding your kitten as much as he or she wants to eat at any time. Free choice feeding can contribute to digestive upset (vomiting and diarrhea), bloating, and obesity. The best approach is to feed your kitten's daily allotment of food in several meals daily. Most kittens are initially fed 4 times daily until 3 months of age. After three months of age, it is best to divide your kitten's daily allotment into 2-3 meals daily. If your kitten hasn't eaten its measured amount of food within 15 minutes, remove it. Continue on with the same measured portion at the next meal. If you find your kitten consistently isn't finishing his or her meal but is otherwise doing well, cut back on the total daily allotment. On the other hand, even if your kitten devours the meal in a few minutes, do not give more food. Watch his or her body condition and review this with us at each visit. If you have more than one kitten or cat, it is best to feed each cat a measured portion in his or her own dish.

4. What does a healthy body condition look like?

You want to be able to easily feel their ribs, see an obvious tuck in the abdomen when you view them from the side and an obvious indentation at the waist when you view them from the top.

5. Avoid feeding your kitten “human food”.

Establishing right from the start that “human food” is “off-limits” will reduce begging and decrease the risk of obesity. It also helps minimize the chance of cats becoming very picky eaters. If you must feed some “human food”, stick to small amounts of lean meats such as cooked chicken breast or fish without sauce. Feeding from the table can also contribute to bad eating habits, and may increase the likelihood of bad behavior such as jumping onto the table or counters. We recommend you avoid feeding raw fish, raw meat, raw eggs, liver or small bones.

Some human foods can be toxic to pets. Do not feed your pet onions, garlic, chocolate, grapes, raisins or baked goods with artificial sweeteners in them.

Many kittens cannot digest milk, and it ends up giving them diarrhea. This can also interfere with the absorption of nutrients from the intestinal tract.

6. What about treats?

We all like to give our kittens treats. It helps us in socializing, training and just plain loving them.

Remember to watch the calorie content as they can vary widely. We have seen treats that range from 1.5 calories to 25 calories PER TREAT. Don't hesitate to ask our staff about treats. We carry a variety of different treats at Landing Animal Clinic.

7. Change diets slowly

If you are changing your kitten's diet, mix the new food with the previous diet in small amounts for the first day or two. Then the portion of the new diet can be gradually increased over a week or so until your kitten is completely on the new diet. This will reduce the likelihood of vomiting and diarrhea. Your kitten should make formed stool in the litter box. Please inform us if this is not the case. Also let us know how many times a day your kitten has a bowel movement. This information will help us to assess the health status of your kitten, the quality of the food he or she is eating and will help you in your litter box training efforts.

We also carry a probiotic for cats at Landing Animal Clinic. This can often help prevent diarrhea during a stressful time such as adjusting to a new home or new diet.

8. Dogs and cats have different requirements

The diets formulated for dogs and cats are significantly different. It is dangerous to feed your cat dog food. Cats require specific nutrients which are not included in dog foods. Also, cats require significantly more protein than dogs.

9. Always have fresh water available

This is particularly important for cats, as most cats tend to drink more if the water is fresh, clean, or moving (dripping from the tap, or a cat fountain). Since Calgary has particularly hard water and can taste like chemicals, you may want to consider giving your cat bottled or Brita water (cats are more sensitive to odors and tastes than we are). The shape of the water bowl can also influence how much a cat will drink. You could consider trying a tall water glass or a bowl with a very wide opening. Both of these options allow them to drink without getting their whiskers wet.

10. Consider offering both dry and canned food from the beginning.

There are certain medical conditions that benefit from eating canned food (e.g. urinary tract disease, kidney disease). If an older cat is only used to the texture of dry food, they may refuse canned food when offered in the future.

Remember that good nutrition is about nutrients NOT ingredients. It is very hard for you as a consumer to evaluate the quality of the food by reading the label. The chemical analysis on the label tells you nothing about the quality or digestibility of the ingredients. We want to help you make decisions about nutrition based on science and not on marketing.

If you would like a science based website for reliable information on pet nutrition, go to <http://www.petfoodnutrition.com/>

Litter Training

In order to prevent litterbox problems in adult cats, it is extremely important to get your kitten off to a good start. Below are some tips on making the litter box a welcoming place!

1. Fortunately, most kittens are attracted to an area where they can scratch, dig, and perhaps bury their urine and stool, so that dirt, clay, or any other “litter” that allows for digging will usually be effective. If there are other surfaces that are attractive to your kitten such as plants with soil, you will need to prevent access to these areas.
2. Most kittens can easily be housetrained if offered a suitable litter, in a quiet location with easy access.
3. The box should be scooped and refilled each day or any time you see it has been used, and it should be changed at least once a week.
4. Whenever you see your kitten using the box, be sure to provide rewards (treats, praise)
5. To ensure that there are enough clean litterboxes available at any one time and to reduce the possibility of conflicts between cats, provide at least one box per cat.
6. Begin by confining your kitten to the room where the litter is located when you cannot supervise him or her. Be sure the room has everything the kitten needs to be happy: places to climb, perch, rest, and scratch, and some food, water, and play toys.
7. If you are supervising and your kitten begins purposely sniffing around, he or she may need to eliminate. Say “litter time,” gently pick them up, and carry them to the litterbox. Put them in the litter box.
8. Choose an appropriate litter material. Studies suggest that more cats prefer clumping litter. Other commercial litter materials may prove equally or more appealing. Kittens that eat litter should not be given clumping litter.
9. If the litter variety you have chosen is not being used by your kitten, try other types. Some kittens may prefer a different texture. Traditional clay litter, recycled newspaper litter, plastic litter pellets (pearls), wheat litter, cedar shavings, or even a little potting soil or sand added to the litter may be more appealing.
10. The litter box should be big enough that an adult cat can move about and scratch. Many litterboxes are too small for a cat to enter comfortably, squat, and dig.
11. Some kittens prefer the privacy of a covered box.
12. Some kittens may prefer a deeper box with more litter while others may prefer lower sides so that they can be more easily accessed.
13. The box should be located in a quiet area that is easily accessible to the pet, especially when he or she wakes from a nap, or after eating or playing.
14. If the box is not being used by your kitten, consider alternative sites that are easier to access, including the ones that the kitten prefers to use. If you use the room for other functions (e.g., bathroom), they may be inaccessible to the kitten when the litter needs to be used.

15. If the litterbox is in an area that might be unpleasant or anxiety-evoking for your kitten (e.g., a dark basement, or next to a furnace, air vent, washing machine, or toilet) it may be necessary to relocate it.
16. Some kittens will avoid the area if they are chased, cornered, or bothered by another cat or dog in the area. If this is the case, then additional locations or more privacy may be needed (e.g., a cat door to the area).

Cleaning up “accidents”:

To clean up any messes your kitten makes, use deodorizers and repellents. Do not use ammonia-based cleaners. Chemically, ammonia and urine are very similar, and this can encourage your kitten to continue messing in the same spot. We have a good line of cleaning products at the clinic, which are very effective. Once you have cleaned the mess, barricade the spot until it is dry so your kitten doesn't come back to investigate. This could cause further accidents.

Socialization Tips for Kitten Owners

1. Socialization is the process in which kittens develop positive relationships with other living creatures.
2. The most sensitive period for successful socialization is the first 3 months of age.
3. It is important for kittens to have frequent, positive social experiences during these early months.
4. Be calm and go slowly in order to avoid overwhelming the kitten.
5. Expose them to new environments, and stimuli (sounds, odors, locations, sights, textures).
6. Begin with calm introductions to one or two people at a time. You can suggest that the people offer the kitten a small piece of food or a treat. This will make the kitten look forward to meeting people.
7. Make sure the kitten has plenty of opportunities to learn about children as well. The ideal home to visit with your kitten is one with calm children and calm pets (who are up to date on their vaccines).
8. Avoid unpleasant experiences. Techniques such as swatting the kitten, shaking them by the scruff, or rubbing his or her face in a mess should never be used. These will teach the kitten to fear the human hand and potentially become fear biters.

9. Consider a kitten socialization class. Unfortunately, these are not as readily available as puppy classes.

Emergency Veterinary Care

If you have an after hour emergency with your new kitten, we recommend contacting one of the following emergency clinics:

- 1) C.A.R.E. Center (403) 520-8387
- 2) Western Vet. Specialist Center (403) 770-1340
- 3) Fish Creek 24hr Pet Hospital (403) 873-1700
- 4) Calgary North Vet Hospital (403) 277-0135
- 5) McKnight 24hr Vet Hospital (403) 457-0911

Poison and Toxins:

Unfortunately, it is common for pets to ingest things that they shouldn't. We want to help you be prepared!

If you think that your pet has ingested something potentially poisonous, please call us or an emergency clinic right away!

There are two pet poison hotlines available to call. For a fee, you can have a telephone consult with an expert.

ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center: 1-888-426-4435

<https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control>

Pet Poison Helpline: 1-855-764-7661

<http://www.petpoisonhelpline.com/pet-owners/emergency/>

Both hotlines have very useful websites with information about poisonous substances. They also have a list of toxic plants.

The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center even has a mobile app. The app includes a toxicity calculator allowing you to quickly determine if your pet ingested a toxic amount of a substance.

What are the most common poisonings in cats?

1. Lilies

2. Tylenol
3. Prescription medications
4. Topical spot-on insecticides (usually over the counter products or when a dog product is applied to a cat)

Pet Insurance

There are several companies in Canada that provide pet health insurance. We encourage you to consider pet insurance for your new kitten. For the most part, their policies include coverage for accident and illness. These are the items that people find it difficult to budget for. It is not uncommon for a veterinary bill to be more than \$2000 for a medical accident or illness. We recommend that you review the pamphlets included with this package and consider if pet insurance is right for you.

Several companies offer free 30 day trials for pet insurance. Our staff would be happy to assist you with setting up a free insurance trial.