

# Gateway Pet Hospital Kitten Guide

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## What items do I need to have for my new cat/kitten?

### Preparing your home for a kitten:

When you first bring your kitten home, you should provide a warm and secure “home area” with the following:

- A safe, secure cat carrier for transportation
- A litter box with clean litter. For kittens, low sides for easy entry are important. A house should have a litter box for each cat in the household plus one extra. They should be in separate locations.
- A food and water bowl. Puzzle feeders are encouraged
- A comfortable resting place or bed.
- Some safe kitten toys for play and exercise

A small bathroom or spare bedroom might work. Any items that the kitten might chew on should be removed. Block off access to any small spaces where the kitten could get trapped. Ideally, the kitten should be supervised while exploring outside of their safe area. This can help discourage undesirable scratching, chewing and destructive behaviors, and prevent your kitten from getting into trouble.

### Safe Toys

Cats and kittens love to play! They are amazingly agile and athletic creatures in their ability to run, jump, pounce, and dash. They also have a strong prey drive and love to practice their hunting behaviours through play. Cat toys can be very simple, and your kitten’s imagination and ability to entertain herself/himself will take it from there. A rolled-up piece of paper, an empty paper bag, a cardboard box, or a toilet paper roll will do just fine. Cats tend to love small light objects that are “flickable” like ping pong balls and knots of felt or fabric. “Fishing pole” toys like feathers or felt that are suspended from a string and a stick are very popular and have the added benefit of protecting the human from inadvertently being scratched or bitten—this is a great option for children to interact with a new kitten!

Avoid using your hands directly for play as this can lead to inappropriate biting. Avoid using laser pointers with your cat: studies have shown they can cause frustration and can create abnormal obsessive/repetitive behaviours.

Toys like treat balls or food puzzles that end in a food reward can satisfy your cat's desire to hunt. Catnip is a member of the mint family. It has a chemical that attracts cats. When dried, it has a strong odour that can have a powerful effect on some (but not all) cats. Some cats can get overstimulated to the point of aggression with catnip. Others might just get relaxed. You can keep some dried catnip around to help attract your cat to a scratching post or cat tree or simply just for his/her enjoyment. Don't worry, your cat will not get addicted to catnip!

There are several household items that can be dangerous to kittens and cats. They can inadvertently eat certain items that will cause intestinal obstructions or damage. It is important to kitten-proof your house by removing items such as the following:

- String, yarn, ribbon, dental floss
- Paper clips
- Pins and needles (especially sewing needles with string attached)
- Rubber bands or hair ties
- Plastic bags
- Anything else that your cat might chew

### Scratching Posts

Scratching is an important cat behaviour that should be allowed and encouraged in an appropriate manner. Most cats, if trained appropriately, will use a scratching post regularly instead of scratching furniture. It is important to provide your kitten with multiple mediums to scratch and stretch. You can encourage your cat to use a scratching post by placing it in an area that the family spends the most time in.

Using a scratching post in combination with a "cat tower" allows you to incorporate perching, climbing, playing, and resting areas to make using the scratching post fun. You can sprinkle catnip onto the scratching post or use an attractant such as Feliway to attract your cat to the area. Catnip sprays work well too!

Cats often develop a preference for a certain type of material and location. Some different types to consider:

- Carpet wrapped posts either horizontal or vertical

- Sisal or rope wrapped posts, horizontal or vertical, or even hanging from a doorknob
- Corrugated cardboard scratching toys can be purchased inexpensively and come in various shapes and sizes.
- Some cats prefer horizontal scratching. It is best to provide a horizontal scratcher as well until you have determined their preferences.

Inappropriate scratching and destruction of furniture can be frustrating. By training your cat to use scratching posts and scratching areas from a young age, inappropriate scratching behaviours can be minimized.

### Cat Carrier

It is important for cats to be comfortable with their pet carrier. Keeping the carrier out so that your kitten is free to explore it can help with this. You can even leave some treats inside for your kitten to discover. If keeping the carrier out is not possible, bring the carrier out at regular intervals. Provide fresh clean bedding in the carrier, such as a blanket or pillow. Consider also placing a toy or other familiar item in the carrier. Pheromone sprays such as Feliway (available from the vet or pet store) can be used to help reduce anxiety in the carrier. Reward your kitten or cat with treats when he/she spends time in and around the carrier and allow him/her to move in and out of it freely with the door open. Once he/she is comfortable with it, sessions can be extended to closing the door and even picking it up. This training should continue throughout your pet's life!

## Should I let my cat/kitten go outdoors?

An important factor to consider when getting a kitten or cat is whether or not to allow them access to the outdoors. Cats that roam freely outdoors are at a significantly increased risk of health problems that include cat fight wounds, parasitism, cuts and lacerations, exposure to deadly viruses, injuries from interactions with dogs or other wildlife, getting hit by a vehicle, and getting lost. However, we do know that access to the outdoors promotes exercise and emotional wellbeing.

One way to safely provide outdoor access to your cat is to train him/her to accept a leash and harness and spend time outdoors together this way. Some cat owners have outdoor enclosures for their cats, which can also be an excellent option provided that the enclosure is safe and secure. However, for most pet owners, their cats will spend most of their time indoors. Indoor cats can become bored, which can lead to behavioural problems, stress and obesity. Providing plenty of environmental enrichment is extremely important. Scheduling regular play sessions with your cat and providing them with an exciting rotation of safe toys, food puzzles and games is an excellent way to help with this.

Check out the website Indoor Pet Initiative for some excellent resources at

<https://indoorpet.osu.edu/cats>

If you decide to allow your cat to have unsupervised time outdoors, it is important to have him/her up to date on all the core vaccines (feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, panleukopenia, and rabies). It is also very important to have them vaccinated against Feline Leukemia Virus. This virus is spread by other cats, usually through bite wounds or close contact, and is much more common in outdoor cats. This deadly virus is preventable with vaccination. Ideally, all kittens should be tested for feline leukemia as well as feline immunodeficiency virus. We strongly recommend considering feline leukemia vaccination in young kittens, as despite your best intentions, cats sometimes do end up being outside.

### Leash and Harness Use

Kittens can be trained to wear a harness and leash. This can allow for safe transport of your cat and also allow your cat to have safe, supervised outdoor time. Like all training, it is best to start getting your kitten accustomed to a harness at a young age. Keep training sessions short (3-5 minutes max) and create a positive association by offering your kitten their favourite treats. Do not attempt to just put the harness on your kitten. Rather, focus on proper desensitization of the harness. This is a great article to help you get started:

<https://www.fearfreehappyhomes.com/leash-training-for-a-happier-more-confident-cat/>

## Kitty Litter and Litter Habits

-Kittens will need a litter box that is the appropriate size for them. It will need to have short sides so that they can easily get in and out. The box should be long and wide enough for them to easily turn around (ideally at least 1.5x the length the cat)

-Encourage litter box use by providing rewards when your kitten uses the box. Ideally, the litter box should be placed in a quiet, private area away from noises such as laundry machines and dehumidifiers.

-Scoop urine and stool from the litter box daily or twice daily. The entire litter box should be completely emptied and refilled every 1-4 weeks.

-Keep a box on every floor if possible. Always provide at least 1 more box than the number of cats in your household.

-If your cat or kitten ever stops using the litter box for urinating or defecating, it is important to contact your veterinarian right away. This behaviour might be related to a medical condition, a concern with the litter box itself, or a stress-induced behaviour. Urinating outside the litter box is a messy and frustrating behaviour, and sadly it is the most common

reason that cats are relinquished to animal shelters. Addressing the problem immediately can usually lead to a resolution of the behaviour and help prevent it from becoming habitual.

Every cat will have different litter preferences. Interestingly, they often learn litter substrate preferences and habits from their mother before they are weaned! However, there are some common trends in litter preference that can help you choose the right litter the first time.

- First, most cats prefer unscented litter. Their sense of smell is quite sensitive to strong odours and generally they will avoid strong smelling litter.

- Most cats prefer smaller particles like sand over pellets. This makes sense considering they are desert animals!

- Most humans prefer clumping clay litter, as it makes cleanup a breeze. It also minimizes the chances that urine-soaked litter will stick to your cat's paws.

- Choose a litter that is odour absorbing or use baking soda or charcoal in or around the litter.

- Low dust litters can help prevent litter dust from being tracked around your home. They also reduce the amount of particulate matter in the air that can aggravate human and feline asthma.

- Consider using a litter tracking mat to catch any stray litter when your cat jumps out of their box.

- Consider a Litter Locker for easy cleanup.

- Pheromone attractants such as Feliway can help attract cats to the litter box.

- Self-cleaning litter boxes are available for easier clean up, but be careful! Some cats do not like the noise these boxes create, and this may cause a litter box aversion.

## How often should my cat/kitten come to the vet?

Regular veterinary care is very important to your cat's health. Your kitten should be seen by a veterinarian at least 2-3 times to complete his/her initial vaccination series. After that, routine health visits should be planned once yearly. Once your cat becomes a senior, these visits are often recommended twice yearly. Your veterinarian can pick up on many health problems that would otherwise go unnoticed. These regular visits are an important time to examine your cat for dental disease, heart disease, orthopedic problems, lumps

and bumps etc. It is also a time to discuss preventative care such as vaccinations and deworming, nutrition, and behavioural problems.

Some cats do very well being loaded into a carrier and driven to a veterinary clinic for an examination by your veterinary team. However, some cats find this process extremely stressful. As described above, training your cat to accept their carrier is an excellent way to help reduce the stress of vet visits. Nevertheless, in some cats, the stress is still a concern to the pet owners and the veterinary team. Stress can sometimes be displayed with vocalizations, and aggression. Other times it is displayed as extremely submissive behaviour such as trembling and hiding. At Gateway Pet Hospital, we do our very best to minimize the stress of your cat's visit. We have an exam room designed just for cats, with cat grass, soft music, fluffy towels, and a cat tree for perching. We spray calming pheromone sprays and provide treats and catnip. If the experience is still too stressful for your cat however, we do recommend the use of pre-appointment medications to help calm and relax your cat for their visit. Making their visit as enjoyable as possible will help prevent the experience from getting worse every time you come in. Your veterinarian may make a recommendation to use pre-appointment medications, but please give us a call and inquire about them if you feel your cat might benefit from them!

### What costs should I expect when owning a cat/kitten?

Who can resist a kitten? They are adorable! But before you commit to owning this little ball of fluff, it's important to understand the financial responsibilities with pet ownership. Responsible pet ownership is a very important aspect of maintaining your cat's health and wellbeing, and subsequently the human-animal bond. Here are some guidelines as to what financial obligations you can expect to face when bringing a cat or kitten into your home:

- 1) Initial expenses \$800-\$1800: This includes adoption fees and the first year of vaccinations, deworming and flea prevention, microchipping, spaying/neutering, food, supplies (bed, toys, litter box, scratching post, collar, brush, food and water bowls etc).
- 2) Ongoing yearly expenses \$600-\$1800 per year: This includes cat litter, food, deworming and flea preventatives, and yearly vet visits and vaccinations.
- 3) Additional costs \$600-\$3000: There are additional costs to consider when owning a cat. These might be unexpected or inconsistent. Some things to consider would be pet insurance, cat sitting or boarding fees, emergency medical care, routine dental care and cleaning, and grooming fees.

## Introducing my Cat/Kitten to Other Cats in the Home

Regardless of how calm and sweet your current cat might be, introducing a new kitten to the home can elicit some strong responses. Cats are notoriously fastidious about their environment, their social status and their litter box arrangements. Adding another feline to the home, especially a highly energetic kitten still in the process of learning social and physical boundaries, can cause jealousy, discomfort and even aggression. Taking the process slowly and carefully can help set the groundwork for a good inter-cat relationship. Here are some steps that you can follow to help with this process:

*Integration of the new kitten into your existing cat(s)' current social and family structure might take days to weeks or even months.*

- 1) Have two separate areas that have resting, feeding, water and litter stations and everything each cat needs to be comfortable.
- 2) Start by allowing the cats to live separately in these designated areas. At first, you can rotate some easy to move items such as bedding between the two areas. When introducing an item that came from the other cat's enclosure, ensure it is paired with some tasty treats, petting and play.
- 3) Once the cats are comfortable with these rotated items, you can start to rotate them back and forth between the two different resting areas. Again, offering positive reinforcement via treats, petting and play is encouraged throughout this process.
- 4) Once the cats appear comfortable with rotating their environments back and forth, consider allowing them to meet through a baby gate or screen. Ideally, there should be one adult present per cat during these initial introductions. If you are introducing multiple existing cats to the new cat, consider doing this one cat at a time. Watch carefully for signs of stress. If you see signs of fighting, fear or aggression go back to the previous step or consider seeking professional training advice.
- 5) If the initial introductions go well, you can progress to having the cats interact in a controlled environment under direct supervision. After a couple of days, you can allow the kitten and the cat to meet. Ideally this should happen over mealtime, with separate bowls spaced several feet apart. This way, their desire to eat may trump their desire to be distracted. Some growling and hissing is to be expected. Be ready (ideally with a blanket) to separate them if a fight begins. Hopefully they will already be accustomed to each other's scent and will settle in quickly. After mealtime, separate them again. At the next mealtime, repeat this process. Gradually increase the amount of time they spend together. Share



affection and treats equally and fairly between them. Use treats to reward them for positive interactions.

6) Once supervised visits have proven to go well, the cats can start to share a space unsupervised. They may coexist but generally ignore each other, or they may develop a relationship where they sleep together, play together and even groom each other. All of these are acceptable outcomes!

## Introducing my Cat/Kitten to Other Dogs in the Home

Introducing your new kitten to an existing dog in the house might be another challenge that you face. Some cats and kittens will respond well to meeting a dog, and others will not. Dogs will have a variety of different responses to meeting a cat. These reactions are based on breed, previous experiences, and individual personalities. Here is what we recommend to get the introduction started:

- 1) Have a safe and secure area for your new kitten, complete with all the things he/she will need, that the dog cannot access.
- 2) Start by rotating bedding between the cat's area and the dog's area. Continue to do this until both animals appear relaxed with the scent of the other.
- 3) Once they are comfortable with rotating bedding, introductions can be made. Ideally, leave the cat in the secure area, but have a baby gate or other secure barrier through which the animals can see each other. It is very important that the dog is also on a leash, with a secure collar or harness. Allow the dog to approach the barrier, and provide treats for both the cat and the dog. Start with short 1-2 second interactions. Repeat this process once or twice daily until both the dog and the kitten appear relaxed.
- 4) If you see any evidence of fear or aggression from either animal, backtrack on your progress, or seek professional help.
- 5) If the initial introductions go well, allow the cat to investigate the dog's environment while the dog is wearing a secure leash or harness. Continue to provide treats or toys to both animals for positive reinforcement of their progress.
- 6) Once you are very comfortable with their interactions with your dog on leash/harness, you can progressively give more freedom to each animal. For example, allowing your dog to wander on a long leash and eventually progress to removing the leash but continuing vigilant supervision. Always ensure the cat has plenty of areas to hide or escape from the dog such as cat towers, climbing shelves, and secure, dog-proof hides.

7) Interrupt any inappropriate play such as cat stalking, pouncing, swatting or biting from either pet. If you are struggling with your dog's predatory behaviour towards your cat, seek the guidance of a certified professional.

8) Unsupervised time together should not be permitted until they are very comfortable and consistently displaying non-aggressive behaviour.

## Grooming

Grooming your kitten is a very important part of his/her health care and husbandry. As soon as your kitten is comfortable in the new environment, it is important to start positive handling interactions. Gently handling your kitten on a regular basis and combining this handling with tasty treats and favorite toys will help him/her to allow and even enjoy being groomed and handled. Gradual introduction of brushing, nail trimming, tooth brushing, and handling of ears, paws, and lips can be an incredibly important part of your kitten's training. It is very important not to push your kitten to the point of stress or fear during these interactions. Work slowly so they develop only positive feelings about your progress, and always pair these interactions with something your kitten likes, such as treats or scratches.

## Behaviour

### Socialization

Kitten development and socialization has phases similar to that of puppies. Kittens usually stay with their mother until they are 7-8 weeks of age. However, it has been shown that daily handling by humans prior to this is very important for socialization and development. Between 8 and 12 weeks of age, social play such as chasing, hiding and pouncing peaks. After that, agonistic play becomes more prominent and may include predatory play and object play. Appropriate human-cat interactions should begin as soon as possible once you bring your kitten home. Reward your kitten with affection and treats for positive behaviours such as responding to his/her name, using the litter box, and using a scratching post. Calm, quiet behaviour should be rewarded also. Handling exercises should be performed regularly including handling your kitten's paws, gently retracting their nails, pulling back their lips to look at their teeth, brushing them, and handling their ears. Keep handling sessions short, use food rewards, and pick a time when your kitten is calm and relaxed. Play is a very important part of kitten behaviour. Your kitten should always be encouraged to play with toys rather than human hands and feet.

## Biting and Scratching

Biting and scratching can sometimes occur when kittens are playing. However, it is important to teach your kitten not to bite and scratch you when they are young. Otherwise, as they age, biting and scratching can become painful and cause injury. Focus their playful energy on a toy instead of your hands or feet, ideally using a toy that can be held away from your body such as a feather on a string, or a ball or stuffed toy. Watch your kitten for pouncing behaviour and try to redirect this behaviour to a toy or scratching post. Signs of an impending kitty pounce usually include crouched posture, flat ears and a flicking tail. Please call us anytime if you would like to discuss behavioural concerns you are having.

## Vaccination

### **Protect Your Kitten!**

All cats need to be protected against viral infectious diseases. It is vital your kitten receives all of the kitten boosters in a timely manner. This means each booster should be scheduled 4 weeks apart. With each booster, the body will develop a greater response and provide better protection against infection. If more than 4 weeks lapse between vaccinations, your kitten may be at risk of contracting an infection. Revaccination should occur in 1 year and then on a schedule as determined by your veterinarian.

#### Panleukopenia:

All cats should be vaccinated for the gastrointestinal virus Panleukopenia. It is most common in areas where there are unvaccinated cats living together. It causes lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea and can cause death.

#### Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis and Calicivirus:

These upper respiratory viruses are common amongst cats and are very contagious. Cats can be infected by direct contact with infected cats, or by coming in contact with blankets, food bowls, cages, or humans that have been in contact with infected cats.

#### Rabies:

In the province of Ontario, all cats must also be vaccinated against Rabies by law. Rabies is a fatal disease that can be acquired through a bite from infected wildlife, such as racoons or bats, and can be transmitted to humans.

#### Feline Leukemia:

Feline leukemia is a virus that is transmitted through contact with infected body fluids (urine, saliva) or feces. There is no cure for this disease. Some cats can live with no clinical

signs for extended periods of time, and others develop immune system dysfunction and succumb to diseases like cancer and anemia. Feline leukemia vaccine should be given to any cat that will have access to the outdoors. It is recommended to vaccinate kittens for feline leukemia if there is any chance of them gaining access to the outdoors, even if by accident.

### GPH Position Statement On Vaccination

Gateway Pet Hospital supports the use of vaccination against infectious disease in dogs and cats. Our vaccination protocols are designed based on the latest information about local disease risk. We design our protocols using the most recent professional guidelines and duration of immunity studies. We tailor our protocols to each pet based on the needs of the pet and the pet's family.

#### Key Points:

- Vaccines play an important role in the health and welfare of pets and humans.
- Vaccines registered for use in Canada have been tested for safety and efficacy.
- The vaccination needs of every patient is assessed regularly and adjusted as needed.

## Vaccinations 101

### How do vaccinations work?

- Vaccinations contain very small amounts of virus or bacteria that have been modified so that they cannot cause disease. They stimulate the body's immune system to develop protection against that disease. If the body is later exposed to that disease, it will quickly be able to respond and destroy that disease-causing virus or bacteria.

### How often are vaccines necessary?

-Research is always ongoing to study the duration of immunity to vaccinations. Re-vaccination intervals are currently set to ensure that populations of pets remain protected against life threatening diseases. Blood tests called titres can be used to determine antibody levels in your pet and help guide vaccination intervals. However, titre levels do not always accurately reflect the pet's immunity and can be expensive. Talk to your veterinarian about your pet's vaccine intervals.

### What vaccines are given to my cat?

-Vaccinations are often written in a short form that uses 1 or 2 letters to represent one of the antigens. Below is a list of the most common feline vaccinations.

R (or FVP)– Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis

C– Calicivirus

P– Panleukopenia

R– Rabies -Rabies is required by Law in Ontario, and proof of up-to-date Rabies vaccination is required for border crossings, boarding or grooming facilities.

FeLeuk– Feline leukemia virus -Vaccination against feline leukemia is recommended for all cats that spend time outdoors. It is spread by contact with other cats.

## GPH Feline Vaccination Protocol

Kittens < 20 weeks of age:

-FVRCP starting at 6-8 weeks and repeating every 4 weeks for a minimum of 2 doses until 16-20 weeks of age.

### **Typical vaccination protocol:**

8 weeks: FVRCP

12 weeks: FVRCP +/- Feleuk 16 weeks: FVRCP + Rabies +/- Feleuk

16 weeks: FVRCP + Rabies +/- Feleuk

Kittens/Cats >= 20 weeks of age that have not had an initial kitten series:

-RCP +/- Feleuk given as 2 doses, 3-4 weeks apart.

-Purevax Rabies 1 year vaccine

### **Typical Protocol Initial:**

FVRCP + Purevax Rabies 1 year +/- Feleuk Booster

3-4 weeks later: FVRCP +/- Feleuk

1 year booster

Regardless of age, all INITIAL vaccination series must be followed by a booster 1 year later

### **Typical Protocol:**

FVRCP + Purevax Rabies (1 year or 3 year) +/- Feleuk

> 2 years of age (1 year after the 1 year booster):

-FVRCP every 3 years. Rabies either every 1 year or every 3 years depending on product given

-Feleuk yearly

## Parasites

All cats, even indoor cats, are at risk for parasites that can make them (and you!) sick. Kittens may acquire parasites from their mother. All kittens require a minimum of three deworming treatments, 2 weeks apart, followed by a monthly broad spectrum dewormer until 6 months of age. Even indoor-only cats can acquire parasites. They can be transmitted by other pets and wildlife, rodents, by eating fleas and other bugs, insect bites, or even from the debris that comes in on the shoes of humans. Cats over 6 months of age should receive parasite prevention based on their individual risk factors and lifestyle. Not all parasites cause obvious clinical signs, and not all parasites respond to all parasite preventatives. We recommend that your pet have a fecal examination at least once yearly, at their annual examination, to determine if parasites are a concern with your cat.

### Internal Parasites

-Roundworms are a very common internal parasite that affect most cats at least once in their lifetime. Eggs can be ingested in the environment or by eating rodents.

-Hookworms can be fatal, especially in kittens.

-Tapeworms are a common parasite in cats and kittens, and sometimes appear like pieces of white rice near your cat's tail. They usually come from ingesting a flea or eating rodents.

-Heartworm is well known for its effects on dogs, but can be transmitted to cats also. It is spread by mosquitoes and can cause serious illness.

### External Parasites

-Fleas are a source of discomfort and disease. They can spread tapeworm and the parasite that causes catscratch disease (cat-scratch fever).

-Ticks can carry multiple diseases and are a concern for cats, dogs, and humans.

-Mites are microscopic parasites that cause irritation and severe itching.

-Lice are smaller than fleas and live in the skin of cats, causing itching and irritation.

## GPH Feline Parasite Prevention Options

### Year-Round Complete Protection

#### WHO?:

- High risk cats and families.
- Families with small children, pregnant women, immunocompromised individuals.
- Cats that go outdoors unattended year round.

#### WHY?:

- Children, pregnant women, and immunocompromised individuals are more likely to contract parasites from cats.
- Cats that are roaming free are much more likely to encounter fleas, lice, ticks, and intestinal parasites.

#### WHAT?:

- Protect your cat from external parasites like fleas, lice, mites and ticks. Limit exposure to parasite borne diseases such as tapeworm and bartonellosis. Prevent development of heartworm from mosquitoes. Prevent and treat intestinal parasites from the environment.
- Protect your family from external and internal parasites that are transmissible to humans, including roundworms and hookworms.

#### HOW?:

Year round coverage with Nexgard Combo

### Seasonal Complete Protection

#### WHO?:

Intermediate Risk cats and Families

- Families with small children, pregnant women, immunocompromised individuals.
- Cats that go outdoors attended on a leash or cats in a household with other pets that go outdoors.

#### WHY?:

-Children, pregnant women, and immunocompromised individuals are more likely to contract parasites from cats.

-Cats that are roaming free are much more likely to encounter fleas, lice and ticks and intestinal parasites.

WHAT?:

-Protect your cat from external parasites like fleas, lice, mites, and ticks. Limit exposure to parasite borne diseases such as tapeworm and bartonellosis. Prevent development of heartworm from mosquitoes. Prevent and treat intestinal parasites from the environment.

-Protect your family from external and internal parasites that are transmissible to humans, including roundworms and hookworms.

HOW?

Seasonal coverage with oral Milbemax every 3 months and Credelio Cat monthly when the cat is going outdoors. Nexgard Combo (topical) could also be used alone seasonally.

### Basic Protection

WHO?:

Low risk cats and Families

-Cats are not exposed to small children, pregnant women, immunocompromised individuals.

-Households where fleas are not a concern.

-Indoor only cats

WHY?:

-Intestinal parasite prevention is still recommended 4 times yearly even in indoor cats, as they are still shown to commonly contract intestinal parasites.

WHAT?:

-Protect your family from external and internal parasites that are transmissible to humans, roundworms and hookworms.

HOW?

-Milbemax oral every 3 months year round



## Spaying and Neutering

### What is Spaying?

Spaying a female cat involves the removal of both the uterus and ovaries. It is a major surgery but commonly performed. We recommend that your kitten is spayed by 6 months of age before she reaches sexual maturity and comes into “heat.”

### Benefits of Spaying:

1. Decreased behavioural problems such as roaming, urine spraying, and fighting.
2. Reduction in the risk of mammary cancer: There is a 91% reduction in the risk of mammary adenocarcinoma in female cats that are spayed before 6 months of age.
3. Pyometra Prevention – Pyometra is a life-threatening infection of the uterus that generally occurs in middle-aged to older female cats but can occur any time after the first heat cycle. The hormone progesterone, which primes the uterus for potential pregnancy, does so by causing proliferation of the blood-filled uterine lining and suppressing uterine immune function. It is thus easy during a heat cycle for bacteria from the vagina to infect the uterus. The uterus with pyometra swells dramatically and is filled with pus, bacteria, dying tissues, and toxins. **Without treatment pyometra is fatal. Treatment for pyometra involves surgery on a potentially unstable patient and can be risky and very expensive.**
4. Convenience – Female cats come into “heat” soon after 6 months of age. During a heat cycle they are often observed vocalizing (yowling) and constantly wanting attention. They will roll on the floor, rub up against furniture and seek constant attention. These behavioural changes often become annoying to owners. Heat cycles can last from several days to two weeks and will continue to happen regularly until they are spayed or bred, usually occurring every 1-6 weeks depending on the geographical location and time of year.
5. Pregnancy complications – Although it may seem fun to consider having a litter of kittens, it is important to remember the toll that pregnancy can take on your cat. Pregnancy complications can be risky and expensive. Pregnancy will permanently change the appearance of your cat, with enlarged mammary glands and vulva. Caring for kittens can

be expensive, as they will need to be fed as they wean off of their mother's milk, and should be vaccinated and dewormed before they go to a new home.

6. Population control – Humane societies and rescues are overpopulated with cats that cannot find homes. It is incredibly important to animal welfare to reduce the pressures of overpopulation by avoiding casual breeding.

### What is Neutering?

Neutering a male cat involves the removal of both testicles through two small incisions made into the scrotum at the level of each testicle. We strongly recommend neutering male cats by 6 months of age, as behavioural problems such as urine marking can become a concern once they have reached sexual maturity.

### Benefits of Neutering:

1. Preventing unwanted behaviours –The importance of neutering male cats for the prevention of behavioural problems cannot be overstated. Unneutered male cats are much more inclined to develop urine marking behaviours in the home as well as inter-cat aggression and roaming behaviours. Un-neutered cat urine has a very potent, undesirable smell.

2. Population control – Humane societies and rescues are overpopulated with cats that cannot find homes. It is incredibly important to animal welfare to reduce the pressures of overpopulation by avoiding casual breeding.

### What is involved in a Spay or Neuter?

When you trust your precious family members to Gateway Pet Hospital for a surgery or procedure, we will treat them as if they are our own.

Every hospital has different equipment, staff and protocols. A surgery performed at one hospital can be very different than the same surgery performed at a different hospital. As a pet owner, it is extremely important for you to be comfortable with your pet hospital and your pet's medical team. This may be the only time your pet has to go under general anesthesia for surgery, so ensuring that your hospital is held to the highest standards of care is important.

## **The Gateway Pet Hospital Experience**

We are very proud of the fact that anesthesia and surgery at Gateway Pet Hospital is remarkably similar to that in human medicine. We are thrilled to explain to you what we do to ensure your pet is safe and comfortable.

- Approximately 1 week before surgery, we would like to see your pet for a pre-surgical examination by a Registered Veterinary Technician (a veterinary nurse). There are several important reasons for this.

- o We assess his/her mouth to see if all of their adult teeth came in properly, and look for any baby teeth that have not fallen out as expected.

- o We get an updated weight and ensure they have a healthy body condition.

- o We take pre-surgical bloodwork if you have elected to do so. This ensures we have this important information in advance of the surgery so that we can deal with any concerns and make an anesthetic plan in advance.

- o We discuss the surgery with you in detail, including all the options, and answer any questions so that decisions can be made thoughtfully and involve the entire family. This is usually easier to do in advance of the surgery as morning drop-offs can be rushed and sometimes emotional.

- o We talk about post-surgical instructions and medications. This is something that will be discussed again when you pick up your pet, but hearing it in advance can be helpful so that you know what to expect. You may be so excited to see your pet at the end of his/her surgery day that you might not retain everything we have to tell you!

- o We will go over the pre-operative instructions including when to withhold food on the day before surgery. This information will be repeated when we call you the day before surgery to remind you of your appointment.

- o We will go over the estimate and the costs prior to surgery, and book you a drop off time for the morning of surgery.

- o You will be provided with pre-surgical PVP (Pre-Visit Pharmaceuticals), typically to be given to your dog the evening before and the morning of their procedure. These medications are used to calm your pet and reduce anxiety so that they are able to have the most comfortable visit possible. Staying at the vet for the day can be a stressful experience, and PVP will help us to maintain a positive association with your dog. PVP can also allow us to use less sedation during the induction process!

-On the morning of your pet's surgery, at your drop-off appointment, a Registered Veterinary Technician will take you and your pet into a quiet exam room. At this time, we will go over any last-minute questions about the surgery, options or estimate. You will be asked to sign a surgery consent form and the estimate. We will ask that you provide us with

a phone number where we can reach you, or somebody authorized to make all medical decisions about your pet while they are in hospital.

-Your pet will be taken back to our Treatment Area, and a veterinarian will perform a pre-anesthetic examination. He/she will be assigned a cozy kennel or run in our treatment area where we can closely observe him/her all day.

-The veterinarian and Registered Veterinary Technician team will come up with a customized anesthetic and surgery plan based on your pet's size, age, breed, temperament and any pre-existing conditions.

-Your pet will be given an injection called a "premedication." This usually contains a sedative agent and a painkiller. The sedation is meant to reduce any stress or anxiety that your pet may feel moving forward. The painkiller is given before the procedure to reduce post-operative pain. After the injection, we will preemptively ensure that your pet is kept warm and cozy with a little sweater or blankets that have been warmed as sedation can lead to a drop in body temperature.

-Once the premedication has had time to reach its full effect, usually 10-15 minutes, we will place an IV (intravenous) catheter. This is a small flexible tube that is inserted into the pet's vein to ensure that we can inject fluids and medication right into his/her bloodstream. Your pet is usually very sleepy by this time, and this simple procedure is typically very well tolerated. A small area of fur will need to be shaved usually on one of his/her front legs. The IV catheter is gently bandaged onto the arm and hooked up to a bag of IV fluids.

-IV fluids are an important part of our anesthetic plan and at Gateway they are non-optional with general anesthesia. IV fluids help to maintain and adjust optimal blood pressure under anesthesia and allow access to the bloodstream in case any intraoperative medications are needed. We always use an IV fluid pump attached to the fluid lines to ensure an accurate rate of fluids can be administered. This ensures they receive appropriate doses of fluids to maintain blood pressure during surgery, but also that they do not receive too much fluid which can result in serious problems.

- o Note: In animals that are older, or have underlying health conditions, IV catheter placement and IV fluids may be started prior to the premedication to ensure that we have IV access and several hours of hydration with IV fluids prior to their procedure.

- o Note: Feline neuters do not include IV fluids as this procedure is done with local anesthesia and is a very quick procedure.

-The Veterinarian and Registered Veterinary Technician team will then work together to place your pet under general anesthesia. An anesthetic drug is injected into their IV line in increments to ensure just the right dose is given for the pet to become anesthetized safely. A laryngoscope is used, and a breathing tube of appropriate size is placed into the pet's trachea and secured in place. The team works together to gently inflate a small balloon-like cuff near the tip of the tube to ensure a snug fit so that no fluids can get into their lungs and ensure all the oxygen and anesthetic gases get where they need to go. The breathing tube is attached to an anesthetic machine with a long tube. The anesthetic machine delivers oxygen and an anesthetic gas called isoflurane to keep your pet under anesthesia. This is the same agent used in most human surgeries.

-A Registered Veterinary Technician, with the help of a Veterinary Assistant, will then apply an impressive array of anesthetic monitors to ensure all aspects of your pet's health will be carefully monitored under anesthesia. However, we do not rely fully on machines, so a Registered Veterinary Technician will also be manually monitoring your pet throughout the entire procedure. Gateway Pet Hospital uses the following important monitoring equipment:

- o Pulse oximetry to monitor blood oxygen levels.
- o Capnography to monitor expired carbon dioxide levels.
- o Electrocardiography (ECG) to monitor heart rate and rhythm
- o Blood pressure
- o Constant temperature measurement
- o IV fluid pump rates

-Once your pet is determined to be stable under anesthesia, and monitoring equipment has been attached, his/her surgery site will be clipped and cleaned to make it sterile for surgery. This is all done in our treatment room to ensure no hair or dirt contaminates our sterile surgery suite. When this stage is complete, your pet is carefully moved into our surgery suite.

-Local anesthetics are a very important part of our surgical protocol. We use local anesthetics (freezing) in almost all of our surgeries. We also give pain medications regularly before, during and after surgery. Freezing the surgery sites and managing pain before it starts, even though the pet is under general anesthesia, helps reduce surgical stimulation and allows us to keep your pets' anesthetic doses low. This results in improved blood pressure and other vital signs, and a safer anesthetic.

-Temperature regulation is extremely important when your pet is under anesthetic. Hypothermia (low body temperature) is very common with anesthesia and leads to anesthetic complications. This is especially true in our smaller patients. We use a circulating warm water blanket on our surgery table, a special warming blanket that blows warm air, and even little socks to place on your pet's feet during surgery to ensure they stay toasty.

-Sterile surgery drapes are placed around the surgery site, and the doctor wears a surgery cap and mask, performs a sterile scrub of their hands and arms, and then puts on a sterile surgery gown and gloves.

-The surgery is performed by the doctor while your pet remains under careful observation by the RVT. Adjustments are made regularly to your pet's pain medications, anesthetic doses and fluid rates to ensure all of his/her vitals stay within optimal levels.

-After surgery, the RVT monitors your pet as it recovers from the anesthesia. They remain intubated and on oxygen until they begin to wake up. The breathing tube is removed when they are awake enough to have a swallow reflex. They are transferred to a prewarmed kennel with warmed blankets and remain under careful observation for the remainder of the day. When they are awake enough to eat, we will provide them with a small meal.

## Surgery Options:

### Presurgical Bloodwork:

-We strongly recommend performing pre-anesthetic blood tests for any pet undergoing an anesthetic procedure.

-Pre-anesthetic blood work gives the doctor an inside look at your pet's vital organs and allows detection of organ dysfunction which was previously unknown.

-Certain breeds of dogs have a higher likelihood of congenital health concerns, meaning health problems they have since birth.

-We are especially concerned with the health of the liver and kidneys as these organs help the body eliminate medications used during anesthesia.

-Low or high blood sugar can also have an effect on your pet's response to anesthesia and recovery from surgery.

-Pre-anesthetic blood work also evaluates for anemia and dehydration.

-If there are any abnormalities on this panel of tests, we will call to inform you—possibly postponing surgery if need be. Certain abnormalities may warrant further diagnostic tests.

-In addition, consenting to pre-anesthetic blood work will provide us with normal values for your pet. Since normal blood values vary between individual animals it is beneficial to know what is normal for your pet, so we can use these values as a baseline against which to compare future results should your pet become ill.

### Microchip

-Implanting a microchip in your pet is perhaps the most reliable means of identification to date.

-A microchip is placed underneath your pet's skin (usually between the shoulders) and allows anyone with a microchip scanner to identify your pet easily and safely.

### Retained Deciduous Teeth

-Puppies normally have 28 deciduous (baby) teeth that erupt during the first few months of life.

-Adult dogs have 42 permanent teeth.

-Normally, the roots of the deciduous teeth resorb (essentially disappear) in order for the teeth to become loose and fall out. This allows the permanent teeth to erupt normally.

-When deciduous teeth don't fall out, they are referred to as retained deciduous teeth.

-Retained deciduous teeth should be extracted soon after they are discovered because they will cause dental problems such as overcrowding, plaque buildup, malocclusion or periodontal disease.

-In addition, deciduous teeth can prevent normal development of the adult tooth and eventually erode gum support around the adult tooth.

-If your pet has any retained baby teeth they can be removed at the same time as the dog's spay or neuter. We will assess your pet's mouth carefully during the presurgical visit, and again on the day of his/her surgery and inform you if we detect any retained deciduous teeth.

## **GPH Position Statement on Spaying and Neutering**

Gateway Pet Hospital recommends spaying and neutering of dogs that are not intended for breeding. This recommendation is based on preventing health problems associated with aging intact animals, as well as preventing accidental breedings that contribute to pet

overpopulation. We are dedicated to staying current with developing and evolving research that evaluates the risks and benefits of spaying and neutering. Every individual pet will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and a plan will be formulated with the pet's family.

It is important to remember that the recommendations below are guidelines only. The timing of your pet's spay or neuter is an important item for you to discuss with your veterinary team.

## GPH Position Statement on Feline Declaws

Gateway Pet Hospital prides itself in providing the best possible care for our patients. We are strong advocates for our friends that have no voice and strive to make choices in the best interest of the pet. For that reason, **Gateway Pet Hospital does not perform declaws.**

The term "declawing" actually describes partial digit amputations (usually done on both front paws). As you can imagine, it is a painful procedure that results in cats who can no longer perform their natural scratching and stretching behaviours. While we have provided this surgical option in the past, more and more non-surgical options are available now to help deal with cats who scratch and are destructive.

We understand that there are times when undesirable clawing behaviours can lead to stress and anxiety, and even affect the human-animal bond. We encourage you to speak with us about options if this is a concern for you so that we can work towards a solution.

## Dental Care

Your kitten will soon be losing baby teeth and erupting 30 permanent, or adult teeth. Just like humans your cat only has one set of adult teeth; if a tooth is lost it will not re-grow. Therefore, it is very important to start taking care of your pet's teeth now.

*85% of pets have periodontal disease by the age of 3 years*

### What is Periodontal Disease?

Periodontal disease is a disease around the outside of the tooth. There is little difference physically between the dog or cat's tooth and the human tooth. We all have a set of baby teeth that come in and fall out to make way for adult teeth. We all have nerves and blood vessels in our teeth surrounded by dentin, which is surrounded in turn by a hard coat of enamel. The enamel is bathed in saliva and quickly is covered by plaque (bacteria mixed with saliva). If we do not regularly disinfect our mouths and brush away the plaque, the plaque will mineralize into tartar (also called calculus – gritty material that the dental hygienist scrapes away). Tartar blocks oxygen from getting to the tooth surface, resulting in



changes in the population of the bacteria that can live around the tooth. The bacteria that can withstand the oxygen-poor environment (anaerobic bacteria) are more harmful to the bone and tissues of the gum. After a while, the periodontal ligament becomes damaged, the bone around the tooth is literally eaten away, and the gums become sensitive.

Eventually the tooth is lost and, if the bone damage is severe enough, the jaw can actually break. Worse still, the bacteria of the mouth can seed other areas in the body leading to infection in the heart, liver, kidney or virtually anywhere the bloodstream carries them.

How can I prevent Periodontal Disease?

### **Toothpaste and Brushing**

Just as with your own teeth, nothing beats brushing. The fibers of the toothbrush are able to reach between teeth and under gums to pick out tiny deposits of food. A toothbrush acts as a tiny scrub brush for the closest possible cleaning. Notice the shape of the canine and feline brushes and how they conform to a pet's mouth. You can use a soft human toothbrush, often a child's toothbrush is the most appropriate size. Never use human toothpaste for a pet as these contain sudsing agents and fluoride that are not meant to be swallowed in quantity. Animal toothpastes come in pet-preferred flavours (chicken, seafood, and malt) in addition to the more human-appreciated mint and all are expected to be swallowed. Finger brushes are available and are smaller for puppies and kittens, but sticking with bristles instead of rubber nubs is recommended as they are much better at cleaning below the gumline. Studies have shown that brushing three times a week was adequate to maintain healthy teeth and gums, but daily brushing was needed to control existing gingivitis. Check out our handouts on how to brush! Remember, start SLOW and make it a positive bonding experience for your pet.

### **Dental Diets**

A common misconception is that feeding a kibble diet will protect teeth from dental disease. Consider what it would be like to attempt to replace brushing your own teeth with eating crunchy foods and it is easy to see how ineffective this method would be. When it comes to pet foods, much of the kibble is swallowed whole and not chewed at all. Clearly, there must be more to a dental diet than simple kibble...and in fact there is! Dental diets on the market today use several techniques to help reduce plaque. The first is that the kibbles are very large, which means the pet must chew them before swallowing them. These diets are high in fiber, which means the kibbles do not shatter when chewed but instead the tooth sinks into the kibble allowing plaque to be essentially scrubbed away. The large kibbles may pose an acceptance problem for the pet, leading the owner to use them as

treats or mixed with other kibbles. The smaller the percentage of the diet these kibbles represent, the less benefit will be reaped.

## Nutrition

### How do I choose the right kitten food?

Pet nutrition is a subject that seems to evoke passionate opinions and there is a plethora of misinformation available. The best source of information regarding nutrition is your veterinary team. We deal with nutrition with almost every patient, every day and base our recommendations on sound scientific evidence.

### Kitten specific diets:

During the 1st year of life your kitten will be growing rapidly and require a balanced diet to promote healthy skin, coat, muscles and bones. Kittens should be on a diet specifically formulated for growth. We do not recommend putting kittens on adult or “all stages” diets. Kittens should be fed three times daily at first, dividing their recommended feeding quantity into three equal meals.

### Food bowls:

It is important to note that many kittens and cats react to plastic bowls with skin irritation. Plastic bowls are also more likely to retain smells. Ideally, your kitten’s bowls should be glass, metal or ceramic and easy to clean. If you are concerned that your kitten eats too quickly, you can place the kibble on a flat cookie sheet which usually slows down their eating. You can also purchase food bowls and food puzzles that help to slow down your cat’s eating as well as give them some emotional stimulation.

### Feeding schedule:

It is ok to leave dry food out for your kitten, but canned food should only sit out for 20 mins or less, and then any remaining wet food should be discarded. Once your kitten is 6 months old, it is appropriate to move to once or twice daily feeding. In multiple cat households, we recommend “meal feeding” or using microchip feeders to ensure that every cat gets their own type and quantity of food. Meal feeding involves putting the cat’s food down in separate dishes, and monitoring them while they eat. After a determined amount of time, for example, 10-20 mins, the food is picked up. The cats can then be offered another meal later in the day in a similar fashion. This promotes healthy eating habits and allows you to measure each diet appropriately.

### Type of food:

Not every kitten is the same, and not every kitten food is the same. With so many commercial cat foods out there, choosing a diet can be overwhelming. We carry veterinary kitten and adult cat diets. We will make a recommendation based on your individual kitten. Veterinary exclusive kitten diets are palatability guaranteed. If your kitten won't eat it, simply return it for a full refund. Years of research, intense quality control and feeding trials have been done to support the nutritional claims on our diets. We carry a variety of different diets, geared towards your cat's individual needs. Adult maintenance diets, dental diets, weight control diets, urinary diets and calming diets. Many diets come in dry form or wet form. It is important to form a nutrition plan that suits the individual needs of your cat and your family. Your veterinary team can help you formulate that plan.

Canned food can offer many advantages to your cat's health, including increasing water intake and lower caloric density by volume. Many health conditions that your pet may develop with age benefit from feeding canned foods. For example, feline diabetes, lower urinary tract disease and kidney disease. Cats that are not accustomed to eating wet diets may refuse these diets if not offered until later in life, so starting them as kittens can be a huge benefit. Some feline experts advocate for 100% canned food diets in cats due to their many advantages. Some pet owners find feeding exclusively high-quality canned foods to be more expensive, and more labour intensive due to cleaning of food bowls. We suggest trying a combination of wet and dry food either daily, or even adding wet food in 1-2 times per week. In doing so, it is important to adjust the amount of dry food given to ensure you are not overfeeding.

Commercial raw food diets have gained popularity recently. However, there are significant risks of bacterial and parasitic infections to both pets and humans in households feeding raw diets. Studies have shown a markedly higher rate of nutrient imbalances in commercial raw diets also. However, we do encourage the use of homemade cooked diets and are happy to provide you with resources on how to safely make your cat's food yourself!

#### Treats and human food:

Treats are an excellent way to train and bond with your kitten. Choose small treats with minimal calories for training so that you can give more of them! Ideally, treats should account for less than 10% of your cat's daily intake of calories. Kibble can also be used as a treat for food motivated cats, but remember to remove that kibble from their total recommended quantity. Table food is generally not recommended for cats due to risk of obesity. Contrary to popular belief, cats should not get milk as a treat, as most cats develop lactose intolerance as they age. If you choose to feed your cat table food, very small amounts of fish or lean meat are the best choice.

### Preventing obesity:

Obesity is the most common chronic health problem in cats. Cat foods on the market today are highly palatable and vary widely in calorie content. Feeding unlimited amounts of highly palatable high calorie foods frequently leads to obesity in cats. We have traditionally held the belief that kittens and cats should be fed several small meals throughout the day. However, some studies have shown that feeding adult cats one meal a day might actually lead to better control of appetite and prevent overeating. Daily allotments of food should be carefully measured. Weighing dry diets on a kitchen scale is the most accurate way to ensure careful calorie control over measuring volume.

Even when guidelines are followed properly, weight gain can occur because manufacturer feeding amounts are based on ranges and averages. Keeping track of your pet's weight and body condition score regularly can help catch weight problems early.

### Importance of water intake:

Cats are desert animals and do not naturally drink much water. When on exclusively dry kibble with very low water content, they often are not taking in an ideal amount of water. Canned and moist foods can help increase water intake. Mixing water into canned food, and even dry food, is a great way to promote water intake also. It is important to offer your cat water in several different ways and discover what his/her preferences are. Many cats prefer a circulating water fountain. These can be purchased commercially. Some cats prefer a dish, while others prefer a cup or glass, and others still might prefer a drink from the toilet! It is important to clean water bowls and replace water frequently, so choosing a bowl or fountain that can be cleaned easily is important.

## Pet Insurance

### **Ask us for a free 30-day Insurance Trial!**

Pet insurance is an excellent idea for all pets. Pet owners must be prepared to take on the financial responsibility of owning a pet. However, an unexpected accident or illness can take a toll on your bank account. Medical procedures for pets have advanced and are often comparable to human medicine. Some treatments can be quite costly. While these expenses are covered by OHIP in human medicine, pets are not so fortunate. Pet insurance will help give you the sense of security in knowing that you will have help in paying for expensive veterinary bills. It is best to sign up for pet insurance while your pet is young as most companies will not cover any pre-existing conditions.

## Pet Safety Tips

### Travelling with your cat

Travelling with a cat can be stressful for both you and your cat, but planning ahead can help make the experience better. If possible, it's best to leave your cat at home with a person you trust, a pet care company that does home visits, or at a reputable kennel. When that's not an option, the first step is to take your cat to the veterinarian to make sure that he/she is healthy enough to travel and up to date on necessary vaccines. If your cat requires medication, make sure you have enough to last the length of the trip, as well as any flea, tick and heartworm prevention products if applicable. Some regions have a higher risk of certain parasites, so talk to your veterinarian about the risks associated with where you're going. You may also want to talk to your veterinarian about products and medications that might alleviate your cat's stress during travel.

### **Car travel**

- Keep your cat in a secure, well-ventilated crate or carrier to keep the cat and passengers safe.
- On a hot day, a car can quickly become an oven—even if the windows are open—and lead to heat stroke or death. Never leave an animal alone in a parked vehicle.
- Bring plenty of water for your pet to drink.
- Some places require documentation, like proof of rabies vaccination. Check ahead and make sure you bring the right paperwork.
- Make sure your cat has a proper identification tag in case your pet gets loose. Consider also having him/her microchipped. There are collars available to track your pet with GPS in case he/she were to escape.
- Talk to us if your cat becomes stressed during travel. There are several useful training programs that can be used to get him/her more comfortable with car travel.
- Some cats get nauseous during travel. In these pets, a prescription travel sickness medication may be appropriate.
- We recommend the use of Feliway sprays or collars for pets that get stressed during travel. This pheromone helps reduce anxiety and keep your pet more comfortable. For pets with extreme anxiety, prescription anxiety medications may be considered. Talk to your veterinary team if you are concerned about your pet's travel anxiety.

### **Air travel**

The danger of air travel is not in the flying, but the loading, unloading or waiting in an unsheltered area exposed to the elements. Delays can result in time spent on the runway

before take-off or after landing, when the plane's cargo areas aren't pressurized. During that time, your pet is confined in the cargo hold without fresh air, and temperatures can fluctuate from hot to cold in short periods of time. Due to the uncertainty of departure times and weather conditions, unless it is absolutely necessary for your pet to travel by air, we recommend that you leave him/her at home with a trusted friend or family member or at a reputable boarding kennel. To avoid exposure to extreme temperatures, some airlines won't permit pets to fly at certain times of the year. If you do decide to transport your pet by air, the following guidelines may help to make them safer:

- Buy an approved carrier from an airline, pet store, or veterinary hospital weeks before your trip and allow your animal to get familiar with it.
- Make sure all screws on the carrier are present and tight. You don't want your pet getting loose in the cargo hold. Most pet travel accidents are a result of poorly constructed carriers.
- Don't lock the door in case of emergency, but consider adding a snap closure for security.
- A familiar blanket or toy in the carrier might make your pet more comfortable and less afraid.
- A container for water should be secured to the inside of the carrier and put where it can be filled without opening the cage. A drip bottle is better than an open bowl, but your pet needs to be trained to use this type of bottle before the flight.
- Carriers must be clearly marked "LIVE ANIMALS" and "THIS END UP" in letters at least one inch high. The animal's name and destination, as well as the owner's identification and address, should also be secured to the carrier.
- Travel at off-peak hours. Try to book non-stop flights. If you're taking multiple flights, make sure that your pet has been transferred by confirming this with your flight attendant.
- Sedate your pet only on the advice of your veterinarian. Sedation may lead to serious complications, including inhibiting your pet's ability to regulate body temperature or breathing problems.
- Inform flight attendants that you have a pet on board, especially if your flight is delayed. If your pet is small enough, carry it on board. Many airlines will allow this if the pet carrier fits under the seat in front of you. Check with your airline.
- Make sure your pet has received the appropriate vaccinations for the country you're visiting and that the necessary veterinarian-certified papers are with the pet. Consult the customs/immigration department for local vaccination requirements.

## Pets and Heat Stroke

During the hot summer months, it's important to remember that your furry friend has a limited capacity to deal with the heat, and can easily become overwhelmed, leading to heat stroke.

### What is heat stroke?

Heat stroke happens when your pet's body isn't able to cope with the external heat, leading to illness, organ failure and even death. Humans sweat to help regulate their body temperature, but dogs don't have prominent sweat glands, so they rely on panting to cool off. Cats will sometimes groom themselves as a cooling mechanism but may also pant. Due to this limited ability to cope, dogs and cats can be overwhelmed by the heat, especially when left in a hot car, but even just through physical activity.

### How can I prevent heat stroke?

- Never leave your pet alone in the car. Temperatures in a car can skyrocket in a short period of time, even with the windows rolled down.
- While dogs are at greatest risk, cats and other small pets can also suffer from heat stroke if left in the sun or in a confined, hot space.
- Be aware that certain cats are more susceptible to the heat than others, including overweight cats and those with long hair, thick coats or short faces.
- Keep plenty of fresh water available. If the water bowl is outside, make sure it's in the shade to keep it cool.
- Keep your cat inside on the hottest days of summer.
- Use air conditioning, fans or cooling pads

### What are the signs and symptoms of heat stroke?

- Panting, open mouth breathing, exaggerated breathing
- Muscle twitching
- Anxious or dazed look
- Vomiting
- Weakness
- Increased drooling
- Diarrhea

### What should I do if I think my pet has heat stroke?

If you believe your pet has heat stroke, take them out of the sun and heat and try to lower their body temperature with cool (but not cold) water and damp towels. Allow your pet to

drink if they're able. A pet suffering from heat stroke needs to be seen by a veterinarian as soon as possible, as the condition can cause organ damage or death.

## Pets and Cannabis

### What is cannabis?

Recreational and most medical cannabis products are prepared using the Cannabis sativa L plant, usually by drying its flowers and leaves. More than 100 chemicals, known as cannabinoids, come from the cannabis plant. Cannabis is also called marijuana. Recreational cannabis, which is smoked, vaporized or baked into oral preparations for humans, contains high levels of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which causes psychoactive effects on the mind. This class of cannabis has the highest risk for pet toxicity. Medical cannabis contains moderate to high levels of cannabidiol (CBD), a non-psychoactive cannabinoid compound, and lower levels of THC. These medicinal products may be prescribed to human patients for anti-nausea, pain relief and other medical reasons. Some of these products contain enough THC to produce toxicity in pets.

Hemp is cannabis that contains very low levels (less than 0.3 per cent) of THC in its flowers and leaves. This tends to be most used for “medicinal” purposes for pets, with products including hemp oil, tincture or hemp powder. Effective and safe dosages of hemp products have not been studied.

### Can veterinarians prescribe cannabis products or medical cannabis to pets?

No. Veterinarians are not allowed to prescribe any of these products to pets.

### Is cannabis safe for pets?

The safety and efficacy of these products is unknown. There's also limited research on the use of these types of products in animals. Studies show that dogs have a higher sensitivity to cannabinoids than people, which puts them at risk. Cannabis of any type is not approved for use in animals, and giving products to your pet may have unknown side effects, unproven effectiveness and could result in a medical crisis.

### What are the signs of cannabis toxicity in pets?

- Lack of balance and coordination, fatigue or weakness
- Excessive salivation
- Vomiting
- Dilated pupils



- Tremors or seizures or disorientation
- Slow heart rate
- Change in body temperature
- Sensitivity to light and sound
- Urinary incontinence

#### What should I do if I think my pet has ingested cannabis?

Take your pet to a veterinary hospital immediately. Don't be afraid to tell the veterinarian that your pet has accidentally ingested cannabis products—symptoms are varied and omitting this information can make managing your pet's case difficult. Remember, your veterinarian only has your pet's health in mind.

*With information from the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association and the College of Veterinarians of Ontario.*

## Holiday Hazards

**Chocolate** – That box of chocolates wrapped and trimmed under your tree may satisfy your sweet tooth, but it's poisonous for your dog. Make sure all food-related gifts are tucked away safely.

**Turkey** – Turkey is delicious, but its bones and fat are too much for your pet's stomach and can cause severe upset. Make sure carcass leftovers are secured away from your pet.

**Bones** – Bones are never a good choice for a snack, as they may become lodged or splinter in the digestive system. Ask your veterinarian for a recommendation on appropriate treats.

**Tinsel** – Pets, particularly cats, love to chew and play with glittery tinsel. Unfortunately, they can't resist eating it, and tinsel can become entangled in the intestinal tract. Often, it must be surgically removed.

**Stress** – You may love company during the holidays, but consider whether your pet does, too. The presence of many visitors unknown to your pet can cause unnecessary stress for him/her. If you're planning a party, provide your pet with a quiet, secure place to settle in while you party.

**Gifting pets** – If you're thinking of giving a new pet as a holiday gift, think again. The holidays can be a hectic and stressful time, particularly for a new pet, and the recipient may be unprepared for the responsibility.

**Electrical cords and decorations** – These can pose potential hazards for your pets. Avoid leaving your furry friend unsupervised around these tempting items. Try to segregate your pet from holiday trimmings when you're not home.

**Holiday plants** – A variety of plants can be toxic to your house pet. Check to see if a plant is safe before bringing it into your home.

**Over feeding** – You might overeat during the holidays, but don't increase the treats for your pet. Obesity is one of the major causes of long-term ill health in pets. Maintain your animal's regular diet and keep plenty of fresh water available at all times.

**If your pet becomes ill as a result of encountering any of these holiday hazards, contact your veterinarian immediately for advice on first aid and further treatment.**

## Pets and Poisons

Follow these guidelines to protect your pets from being exposed:

- Be aware of the plants you have in your home and yard. Eating some plants can be fatal to a pet.
- Never allow your pets to have access to the areas where cleaning products are being used or stored. Some cleaning products might only cause mild stomach upset, but others can cause bad burns to the tongue, mouth and stomach.
- When using pest bait or traps, put them in areas that aren't accessible to your pets. Most bait contains sweet smelling inert ingredients, like jelly, peanut butter or sugar, which can also attract your pets.
- Never give your companion animal medication unless directed by a veterinarian. Many medications that are safe for humans can be deadly for animals.
- Keep all prescription and over-the-counter drugs out of your pet's reach, preferably in closed cabinets. Pain killers, cold medicines, anti-cancer drugs, antidepressants, vitamins and diet pills can be lethal to animals, even in small doses.
- Never leave chocolate in reach. Even small amounts can cause problems.
- Many common household items can be lethal to animals. Mothballs, essential oils, coffee grounds, homemade play dough, fabric softener sheets, dishwashing detergent, batteries, cigarettes, alcoholic drinks and hand and foot warmers are all highly toxic, even in small amounts.

-Automotive products such as gasoline, oil and antifreeze should be stored in areas that aren't accessible to your pet. As little as one teaspoon of antifreeze can be deadly to a cat weighing seven pounds; less than one tablespoon can be lethal to a dog weighing 20 pounds.

-Before buying a flea product for use on your pet, ask your veterinarian for a recommendation.

-Read all of the information on labels before using a product on your pet or in your home. Always follow the directions.

-If a product is for use only on dogs, it should never be used on cats; if a product is for use only on cats, it should never be used on dogs.

-Make sure your companion animals don't enter areas where foggers or house sprays have been used for the period of time written on the label.

-Make sure your pets don't go on lawns or in gardens treated with fertilizers, herbicides or insecticides until they have dried completely. Always store these products in areas that aren't accessible to your pets. If you're uncertain about the use of any product, ask the manufacturer and/or your veterinarian for instructions.

*Provided by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. For more information, visit [www.aspca.org](http://www.aspca.org).*

## Potentially Poisonous Plants

-Aloe Vera, Amaryllis, Apple (seeds), Apple Leaf Croton, Apricot (pit), Asparagus Fern, Autumn Crocus, Azalea

-Baby's Breath, Bird of Paradise, Branching Ivy, Buckeye, Buddhist Pine

-Caladium, Calla Lily, Castor Bean, Ceriman, Charming Dieffenbachia, Cherry (seeds and wilting leaves), Chinese Evergreen, Christmas Rose, Cineraria, Clematis, Cordatum, Corn Plant, Cornstalk Plant, Croton, Cuban Laurel, Cutleaf Philodendron, Cycads, Cyclamen

-Daffodil, Devil's Ivy, Dieffenbachia, Dracaena Palm, Dragon Tree, Dumb Cane

-Easter Lily (especially in cats!!!!), Elaine, Elephant Ears, Emerald Feather, English Ivy, Eucalyptus

-Fiddle-leaf fig, Florida Beauty, Foxglove, Fruit Salad Plant

-Geranium, German Ivy, Giant Dumb Cane, Glacier Ivy, Gold Dust Dracaena, Golden Pothos

- Hahn's Self-Branching Ivy, Heartland Philodendron, Hurricane Plant
- Indian Rubber Plant
- Janet Craig Dracaena, Japanese Show Lily (especially in cats!!!), Jerusalem Cherry
- Kalanchoe (Panda bear Plant)
- Lacey Tree Philodendron, Lily of the Valley
- Madagascar Dragon Tree, Marble Queen, Marijuana, Mexican Breadfruit, Miniature Croton, Mistletoe, Morning Glory, Mother-in Law's Tongue
- Narcissus, Needlepoint Ivy, Nephthytis, Nightshade
- Oleander, Onions, Oriental Lily (especially in cats!!!)
- Peace Lily, Peach (wilting leaves and pits), Pencil Cactus, Plumosa Fern, Poinsettia (low toxicity), Poison Ivy, Poison Oak, Pothos, Precatory Bean, Primrose
- Red Emerald, Red Princess, Red-Margined Dracaena, Rhododendron, Ribbon Plant
- Saddle Leaf Philodendron, Sago Palm, Satin Pothos, Schefflera, Silver Pothos, Spotted Dumb Cane, String of Pearls, Striped Dracaena, Sweetheart Ivy, Swiss Cheese Plant
- Taro Vine, Tiger Lily (especially cats!!!), Tomato Plant (green fruit, stem and leaves), Tree Philodendron, Tropic Snow Dieffenbachia
- Weeping Fig
- Yew

*Provided by Dr. Jill Richardson, Veterinary Poison Information Specialist, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, [www.aspca.org](http://www.aspca.org).*