



Golden Valley and Greenbrier Animal Hospitals

KITTEN HANDOUT INDEX

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GETTING YOUR CAT TO THE VETERINARIAN

Providing your cat with good health care, especially preventive health care, can allow her to live a longer, more comfortable life. However, this cannot happen unless you take your cat to see the veterinarian routinely. Many cats dislike going to the veterinarian, and that usually starts with the difficulty of getting your cat into the carrier. Once you've mastered how to get your cat into their carrier, the entire veterinary visit is usually less stressful.

IMPORTANT NOTE! If your cat is struggling to get into the carrier, or does not do well with exam visits, contact our clinics. In some cases our doctors will prescribe medications to help elevate some of those fears for your cat.

PICKING OUT THE RIGHT CARRIER

SAFETY

- Look for a one that is sturdy and comfortable for your cat.
- The Center for Pet Safety recommends that the carrier be belted into the backseat only if they have been crash tested. All others should be placed on the floor of the backseat.

ENTRY AND EXIT

- Look for one with either a top and front opening or a very large round opening. This allows you to easily place your cat in, and take him/her out if your cat is not trained to the carrier.
- It's helpful to have a carrier that can be taken apart in the middle and have the top half be removed. This way your cat can remain in the bottom of the carrier during a check-up by the veterinarian. Many cats feel more secure and experience less anxiety when they can remain in their carrier during the exam.



VISUAL SHIELD/PRIVACY AND VENTILATION

- Cats like privacy, so look for a carrier that offers some kind of visual shield. This makes it less likely for your cat to experience motion-induced anxiety or stomach distress.
- An easy method is to place a towel over the carrier that has just been sprayed or wiped with a synthetic feline pheromone (Feliway®, figure on left). This can help reduce your cat's stress when you go to unfamiliar places. Make sure you can still carry in a stable manner.
- Make sure the carrier has good ventilation.

WHY IS MY CAT FEARFUL OF THE CARRIER?

- Cats are most comfortable with the familiar, and need time to adjust to the unfamiliar. So, if her carrier is not an object in her regular environment, your cat does not have time to become familiar with it.
- Your cat probably associates his/her carrier with visits to the veterinarian's office which is probably not his/her favorite place.
- Respect your cat's need for time to become familiar with new situations, people, and places.
- Stay calm. Cats can sense our anxiety or frustrations, which may cause them to become fearful or anxious.

HELPING YOUR CAT BECOME COMFORTABLE WITH THE CARRIER

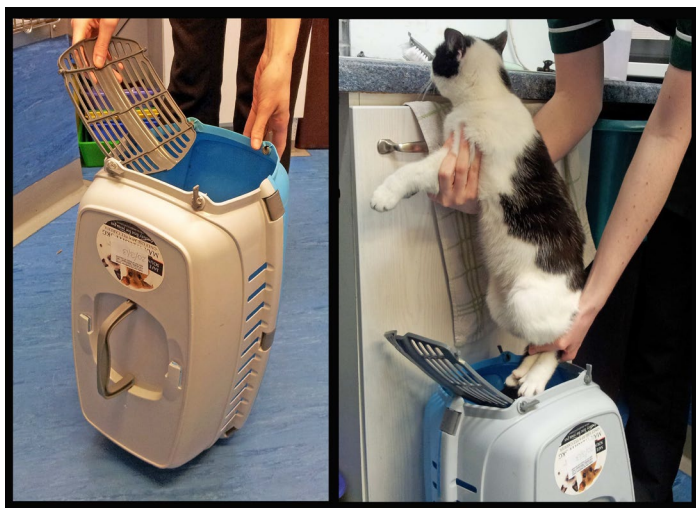
- The goal is for your cat to learn to associate the carrier with positive experiences and enter the carrier frequently and voluntarily.
- Make the carrier a familiar place at home by leaving it in a room where your cat spends a lot of time.
- Place familiar soft bedding inside the carrier. Bedding or clothing with your scent can make your cat feel more secure.
- Utilize synthetic feline pheromone spray or wipes in the carrier. (Feliway®)

- Place treats, catnip, or toys inside the carrier to encourage your cat to go inside. Often, you will first see that treats are removed from the carrier overnight. Cats do not learn from punishment or force. Give rewards to encourage positive behavior.
- It may take days or weeks before your cat starts to trust the carrier. Remain calm, patient, and reward desired behaviors.

GETTING AN UNWILLING CAT INTO THE CARRIER

If your cat needs to be transported immediately to go to the veterinarian or due to another emergency situation, and she is not yet accustomed to the carrier, the following tips may help:

- Start by putting the carrier in a small room with few hiding places.
- Bring your cat into the room and close the door. Move slowly and calmly.
- Do not chase your cat to get her into the carrier.
- Encourage your cat with treats or toys to walk into the carrier.
- If your cat will not walk into the carrier, and your carrier has an opening on the top, gently cradle your cat and lower her into the carrier. Another option is to remove the top half of your carrier while getting your cat to go into the bottom half, and then calmly replace the top. It may be necessary to wrap her in a towel to prevent outstretched legs from getting in the way.



COMING HOME – Keeping the Peace in a Multi-cat Household

Cats are very sensitive to smells, and unfamiliar smells can result in one cat no longer recognizing another. When your cat returns home from the veterinarian's office, she will smell different and unfamiliar. Aggressive behavior can occur when one cat senses another as a stranger. These suggestions can help avoid problems between cats following a veterinary visit:

- Leave your returning cat in the carrier for a few minutes to see how all of your other cats react.
- If all cats appear calm and peaceful, let your returning cat out of the carrier.
- If you sense tension between your cats, or if previous home-comings have resulted in conflict, keep your returning cat in the carrier and take her to a separate room to avoid potential injury from an upset cat. Provide food, water, and litter box for a minimum of 24 hours while she regains the more familiar smell of home.
- If there is still stress after this time, contact your veterinarian for more advice on a slower introduction or medication to help the process.
- A synthetic feline pheromone (Feliway®) can help provide the sense of familiarity.
- For future visits:
 - Use familiar bedding or clothing with your scent, as it retains the smell of home and helps with reintroduction.
 - Use a synthetic feline pheromone (Feliway®).
 - Bring both cats to the veterinary practice together. This can prevent future conflict as both cats will carry the scent of the clinic.

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IMPORTANCE of VACCINATING INDOOR CATS

Many cat owners question whether or not they should vaccinate their cats if they live a strictly indoor life style after they received their initial kitten vaccines. EVERY cat regardless of strictly indoor life style, supervised visits outside, or unsupervised visits should ALL be kept up to date on “Core Vaccines.” Some life styles will require an addition vaccine that is considered a “Non Core Vaccine.” Listed below is what vaccines we have available for cats at our practice.

CORE VACCINES

- RABIES
- DRC (Distemper, Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus)

NON CORE VACCINES

- Feline Leukemia (FeLV) (for cats that go outside unsupervised)

1) CITY/STATE LAWS MAY REQUIRE IT

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) states, “All dogs, cats, and ferrets should be vaccinated and revaccinated for rabies according to product label directions.” Period. There are no exceptions made for animals who live inside. Plus, the CDC adds, “Titers (which measure antibodies in the blood) do not directly correlate with protection because other immunologic factors also play a role in preventing rabies.”

State of Minnesota requires that dog, cats, and ferrets must be vaccinated in accordance with the “Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control” (Minnesota Rules, part 1721.0540 M.S.A. §35.01). The compendium states that “Local governments should initiate and maintain effective programs to ensure vaccination of all dogs, cats, and ferrets and to remove stray and unwanted animals.” Check with your city to see what is required.

Rabies vaccine laws vary from city to city, check with you local law enforcement for what your city requires. Below are some examples of how some cities in the area regulate:

GOLDEN VALLEY

- As of January 1, 2012, the City of Golden Valley no longer requires licenses for dogs.
- Dog owners are required to have their dog(s) vaccinated for rabies and to affix the rabies tag to the dog's collar.
- Cat owners are required to have their cat(s) vaccinated for rabies and to affix the rabies tag to the cat's collar.

MINNETONKA

- All dogs and cats over six months old that reside in the city of Minnetonka are required to have a current rabies vaccination. Animals are not required to wear a rabies tag, but verification of current rabies vaccination by a licensed veterinarian should be available upon request.

MINNEAPOLIS

- By law, all cats, dogs, and ferrets owned in Minneapolis must have a pet license. One requirement of pet licensure is a certification by the owner that the pet has been vaccinated against rabies. Because of this requirement, it's the law that all cats and dogs in Minneapolis have their rabies vaccinations up to date.

2) PROTECTION AGAINST OTHER CATS OR DISEASES

Many cats are exposed to the feline herpes virus at an early age, especially if they came from a crowded shelter or contracted the disease in utero. It's highly contagious and can be spread between cats (but not to people or dogs) through contact with discharge from the eyes, nose or mouth, or by sharing items such as litter boxes and feeding dishes. Cats with weakened immune systems, young cats and flat-faced cats (such as Persians) are especially prone to the disease. Vaccination doesn't annihilate the virus — feline herpes virus is the gift that keeps on giving; but vaccination can help keep it under control. The disease can flare-up, especially in cats without up-to-date vaccinations, causing respiratory infections and eye problems if an animal is stressed or sick.

3) YOUR CAT ESCAPES

Some cats are more adventurous than others and will bolt out of the door before you may be even aware that they escaped. Someone could leave the door open, or if in a new environment your cat could be more fearful. Most areas has

stray/feral/other outside cats roaming in the area for your cat to potentially come into contact to. These cats can carry diseases that can be transmitted to your pet. They are curious about that big, exciting world outside their windows and won't hesitate to go exploring. A repairman or visitor could accidentally leave the door open, paving the way for your cat's escape. You might retrieve them right away, or you might not realize they are missing for several hours. That's plenty of time for you cat to pick a fight with a stray cat carrying disease or have a run-in with a rabid animal.

4) IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A RABID ANIMAL TO GET INTO YOUR HOUSE

It may sound crazy, and may be one of those situations that "never happen to you." It happens more often than one may think, a bat coming into the house, you cat has an interaction with a raccoon, skunk, or some other wild life.

5) NATURAL DISASTERS

Although not as common in Minnesota, natural disasters is another reason to vaccinate your pet. If something happens in your area such as a fire, tornado, flash flooding, or any other disaster, your pet may end up in a shelter. Also, if you have to surrender your animal during a natural disaster to a facility that will take care of them while you are gone, they will only take animals that are up to date on their vaccines.

STATISTICS ON RABIES

While dogs have historically been associated with spreading rabies to people, more cats than dogs are reported rabid in the U.S. each year. Cats are often in close contact with both people and wild animals, including those that primarily spread rabies, like raccoons and bats. Thus rabies may be more easily spread to people from cats.

- Each year in 50 states and Puerto Rico, between 60 to 70 dogs and more than 250 cats are reported rabid.
- Twenty-three cases of human rabies have been reported in the United States in the past decade (2008-2017).
- In 2015 50 states and Puerto Rico reported 5,508 cases of rabies in animals and 3 human rabies cases to CDC.
- In wild animals, bats were the most frequently reported rabid species (30.9% of cases during 2015), followed by raccoons (29.4%), skunks (24.8%), and foxes (5.9%).

ARE VACCINES SAFE FOR MY CAT? - Adjuvant vs. Non-Adjuvant

An **adjuvant** is a substance that is added to a vaccine to increase the body's immune response to the vaccine. In humans, dogs, and other species they are quite safe and effective. In cats however, they have been implicated in causing "Vaccine Site Sarcoma" (VSS) a malignant and often fatal cancer. The risk of this occurring is extremely low, estimated between 1 in 10,000 to 1 in 30,000 cats.

The risk of VSS is almost completely eliminated by the use of "Non-Adjuvanted Vaccines". These vaccinations are specially formulated to eliminate the need for an adjuvant and allow for safe inoculation with little to no risk of tumor formation and are just as effective as their Adjuvanted counterparts. We ONLY use Non-Adjuvanted vaccines at our practice in cats.

Refer to our "Vaccine Reactions" sheet to review what reactions your pet can have to vaccines.

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SCRATCHING IS A NORMAL BEHAVIOR FOR CATS

Your domestic cat has maintained their instincts of their wild ancestors. Cats' claws are physically unique and serve several functions. The forelimb claws are retractable and allow her to expose or retract her nails as needed. It is important to understand that scratching is normal behavior for cats, which has an inherent function. Cat owners must therefore provide alternatives for cats such as suitable scratchers.

Here are some reasons why scratching is a natural behavior for cats:

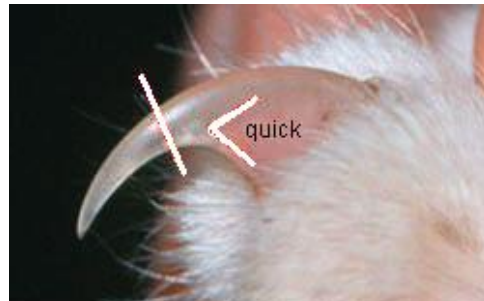
- Stretch their body
- Remove the worn layer of their nail
- Maintain necessary claw motion used in hunting and climbing
- To mark territory, both visually (scratching inanimate objects) and chemically (via pheromones or scent)
- To defend itself during conflict with other cats or other animals

If your cat's scratching or marking has increased, this may be a sign of stress or anxiety, including a threat or restriction to their environmental resources (food, water, litter box, safe place to sleep, familiar territory, etc.). It is important to figure out the cause of your cat's stress or anxiety so you can address the issue and reduce the unwanted scratching behavior.

1) TRIMMING NAILS

Regularly trimming your cat's nails can prevent injury and damage to household items. Make sure you have proper feline nail trimmers so your cat's nails don't splinter. The frequency of nail trimming will depend on your cat.

- Choose nail trimmers that are small enough for cat nails so you can see what you are cutting.
- If possible, start nail trims when they are kittens so they become comfortable with the process.
- If your cat does not like nail trims start slow, offer breaks, and make it a familiar routine.
- Give your cat a high-value treat with every nail trim. Make sure to only use this special treat for nail trims.
- Always trim nails in a calm environment and provide positive reinforcement.



2) SCRATCHING POSTS

Picking The Right One

Most cats like to scratch vertically. So, they need a scratching post that is taller than their body length. This allows them to fully stretch and give a good scratch. If your cat is scratching carpet in your house, try using a horizontal scratcher, to see if (s)he prefers that shape. The texture of the scratching post is also important. Many cats prefer sisal rope; others prefer corrugated cardboard or carpet on the scratching post. Experiment with a variety of textures and types of scratchers to figure out which your cat prefers.

Ways to Train Your Cat to Use the Scratching Post

- If your cat is currently scratching items that you would rather (s)he doesn't scratch. Consider placing a scratching post or pad near that item (i.e. in front of a couch leg).
- If your cat scratches somewhere other than the scratching post or pad; gently pick him/her up, take them to the scratcher, and then reward with a high reward treat.
- If your cat is scratching on furniture or carpet, do not punish him/her. Instead, pay attention to your cat's position and the texture of the material when she scratches. This can help you figure out better choices of scratching posts for your cat.
- Cats often stretch or scratch when they wake up, so place one near your cat's sleeping area.

3) PHERMONES

There are several pheromones types that can be used to calm your cat if there is any behavioral problems.

Feliway® is a synthetic facial pheromone sprays and/or diffusers to help relieve anxiety or stress. Apply a synthetic pheromone spray such as Feliway® on the objects or areas in your home where your cat has exhibited undesired scratching. Applying daily comforting pheromones can prevent your cat's need to mark these areas again.

Feliway® *should not* be sprayed on the desired scratcher. If undesirable scratching occurs in several rooms, indicating a more generalized anxiety or stress, it is recommended to also plug-in a synthetic pheromone diffuser.

Feliscratch® uses a semiochemical (pheromone) message to help attract cats to their posts. The product should be applied to the scratching posts (not on your cat). Catnip is also in Feliscratch®, and the blue colored dye (applied so it looks like another cat has scratched there), all combine to encourage what you want: a cat scratching at the post (figure on right).



4) CLAW CAPS

These caps are glued over your cat's nails to help prevent human injury and damage to household items. The nail caps usually need to be re-applied every 4-6 weeks; therefore they may be a less desirable alternative to regular nail trimming, suitable scratchers, and environmental enrichment (figure on left).



5) ENVIROMENT ENRICHMENT

Most people love watching their cat stalk, pounce, and play. Cats are highly intelligent, naturally curious, and active creatures. We need to make sure to provide them with plenty of mental and physical stimulation. Your cat needs to be able to hunt, stalk, and act out his/her

natural, instinctive behaviors. Provide your cat with appropriate resources so (s)he can play, engage in natural predatory behaviors, and have control over his/her social interactions.

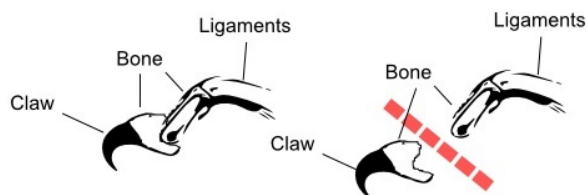
IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- Look for any problems between other cats or household members, which might make your cat feel anxious, threatened, or territorial. Signs of conflict are subtle. If your cats never groom one another, sleep or play together, intercat conflict is likely.
- Clean scratched areas with soap and water to remove the communication marking scents left by your cat.
- Do not use your fingers or toes, or the wiggling of hands or feet as a toy for play. This form of play can lead to biting or scratching, and as a cat grows they will accept it as an appropriate form of play.
- Find a reward that your cat likes. Examples include: treats, catnip, interactive play, and petting or grooming. (Remember to reward within 3 seconds!)

DECLAWING

Declawing entails the amputation of a cat's third phalanx [P3], or third 'toe bone.' Feline declawing is an elective and controversial procedure, which is *not* medically necessary for cats in most instances. Declawing can cause even more behavioral problems down the road.

Unlike human nails, cats' claws are attached to the last bone in their toes. A comparison in human terms would be cutting off a person's finger at the last joint of each finger. Speak with one of our veterinarians for more information.



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INTRODUCING NEW CAT TO HOUSEHOLD

When you already have cats as part of your family, introducing your newly adopted cat can seem like an overwhelming task. Patience is key—the transition can take several weeks, but by planning ahead you can reduce some stress, allow for an easier transition, and build a positive relationship between your feline companions.

STEP ONE: THE FIRST FEW DAYS

- You should isolate your new cat in a separate room with his/her own food, water, litter box, bedding, and toys.
- Bring familiar items from the adoption location to make this room smell comforting and “homey.”
- This first step allows all cats to first get used to the scent and sounds of the other cat without risk of confrontation.
- Be sure to spend a lot of time with each cat or group of cats individually.

STEP TWO: SCENT EXCHANGE

- Once all your cats in the home seem relaxed, gradually start to move the food dishes closer to the door that separates them. If any stress is noted, go back to the step where they were comfortable and work more slowly.
- If your cats are calm, take a cloth/blanket to wipe one cat and then put that cloth in the room with the other cats. Do the same for new and existing cats, so that the others can smell the cat in their area.
- If this is comfortable to all cats, you can also mix the scents on one cloth, wiping first one cat, then the other.
- Remember to reward all calm behaviors with treats and praise in a soft voice.
- When your cats are comfortable with the steps above, it is time to try a brief and safe interaction. This can be done by opening the crack of the door an inch so that both cats are safe, but can start to see each other.
- If one cat hisses or tries to attack, close the door, back up the process, and restart more gradually.

STEP THREE: MEET AND GREET

- When all is going well, place your new cat inside a carrier and allow your other cat(s) to explore by seeing and smelling your new cat more closely in a safe environment.
- Continue to reward calm behaviors with treats and praise in a soft voice.

STEP FOUR: SUPERVISED PLAY DATES

- If your cats seem comfortable, the next step is to try placing them in the same room with direct supervision.
- Start introductions for brief periods to help make it more likely that these experiences will be positive.
- Remember to be patient and go back a few steps if necessary, and gradually re-introduce.

STEP FIVE: MOVING IN NEW CAT TO COMMON LIVING AREA

- Some cat will resource guard their possessions (food, water, bedding, litter boxes) from other cats in the house, even if there is not hissing/growling between the cats it still could be taking place. Something as simple as sitting in front of the doorway to the food or litter box can deter a cat.
- The amount of litter boxes in the household should be the number of cats PLUS one (ex: if you two cats, three litter boxes in the house). The litter boxes should be in separate locations, not right next to each other.
- There may be some tuffs in the house while cats try to find their hierarchy. Try to remain patience, they may never learn to love each other, but they should grow to tolerate one another! The slower and gradual the process, the more likely they will be able to live harmoniously.

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ENVIRONMENT ENRICHMENT

Cats need resources to perform their natural behaviors and have control over their social interactions. Environmental needs include a cat's physical surroundings – indoors, outdoors, or both – as well as their social interactions with humans and other pets. Cats often do not express obvious signs of stress, pain, or sickness that we can easily recognize.

1) SAFE PLACE

Every cat needs a safe place where it can retreat to so that it feels protected that can also be used as a resting area. Most cats prefer that the safe space is big enough to fit only themselves, has sides around it, and is raised off the ground.

2) MULTIPLE and SEPARATE KEY RESOURCES

Key resources include food, water, toileting areas, scratching areas, play areas, and sleeping areas. These resources should have multiple locations so that cats have free access without being challenged by other cats or other potential threats.

3) OPPORTUNITY for PLAY and PREDATORY BEHAVIOR

Play and predatory behaviors allow cats to fulfill their natural need to hunt. Play can be stimulated with the use of interactive toys that mimic prey, such as a toy mouse that is pulled across a floor or feathers on a wand that is waved through the air. Cats need to be able to capture the “prey”, at least intermittently, to prevent frustration.

4) POSITIVE, CONSISTENT, PREDICTABLE HUMAN-CAT INTERACTIONS

Cats' individual preferences determine how much they like human interactions such as petting, grooming, being played with or talked to, being picked up, and sitting or lying on a person's lap. It is important to remember that every cat interacts differently and to respect the cat's individual preferences.

5) RESPECT YOUR CAT'S SENSE OF SMELL.

Unlike humans, cats use their sense of smell to evaluate their surroundings. Cats mark their scent by rubbing their face and body, which deposits natural pheromones to establish boundaries within which they feel safe and secure. Some smells can be threatening to cats, such as the scent of unfamiliar animals or the use of scented products, cleaners, or detergents.

USE FOOD TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

- Cats tend to play more when they are hungry. Hide food around the house for (s)he to “hunt.”
- Use food puzzles or food balls to mimic the action of hunting for prey, and provide a more natural eating behavior. It can also help your cat eat more slowly as (s)he needs to work for his/her food.

STALK, PREY, CATCH

- Encourage your cat to play by using interactive toys that move to mimic prey, such as a toy mouse.
- Allow your cat to capture the ‘prey’ at the end of the hunt/play session to satisfy his/her natural hunting instinct.

OTHER HELPFUL TIPS

- When your cat walks away from you, (s)he is done playing. Do not force interaction, instead let him/her initiate, choose, and control the type of human contact he desires.
- Never use your hands or feet as toys during play. As your kitten grows into a cat, (s)he can have a hard time determining what is too hard for play.
- Teach children and those unfamiliar with cats how to play appropriately with your cats. This will help keep everyone including your cat safe.

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MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT NEUTERING CATS

Definition of “neuter”: Neutering or castration is the removal of both testicles. Occasionally, one or both testicles may be “retained” or “undescended” in a cryptorchid cat. Testicles that stay in the belly should be removed to prevent testicular torsion (a painful condition where a testicle twists on itself) or even testicular cancer (the risk of this condition is much higher when a testicle stays inside the belly). Intact male cats are more likely to “mark” or “spray” in the household. This is a behavioral issue that can generally be avoided if neutered at a younger age.

MYTH: Neutering my cat may make him feel less masculine.

FACT: Pets don't have any concept of sexual identity or ego. Neutering will not change a pet's basic personality. He doesn't suffer any kind of emotional reaction or identity crisis when neutered. You might be surprised to learn that neutering may improve your cat's temperament. Cats that are neutered tend to focus more on their owners and less on their mating drives. Males become less aggressive, less territorial, and wander less from their owners.

MYTH: My pet will get fat and lazy.

FACT: Over 50% of cats in the U.S. are overweight or obese. Cats do not need as much food as many owners may think. Over-feeding and lack of exercise will cause your pet to gain weight. Some cats do become more interested in food after being altered, so you may need to feed smaller portions.

MYTH: Neutering is too expensive.

FACT: Neuter surgery is a one-time cost, and if you factor in the many benefits, such as improved health throughout your cat's lifetime, it is a relatively small

charge. Keep in mind most kittens/cats from a shelter or rescue will come neutered!

MYTH: I have good homes available for all of the kittens.

FACT: True, you may have homes for your kittens, but for every home you find, there is one less home available for a shelter kitten. Also, do you have guarantees that the people who adopt your kittens will not breed them and thus add even more cats to the problem? One less litter can make a difference. Furthermore, a litter of kittens have a huge financial cost and immense responsibility.

MYTH: Neutering is painful to my cat.

FACT: Surgical sterilization is performed under general anesthesia. The procedure itself is not felt by the patient. There may be mild discomfort after the surgery, but most animals return to normal activity within 24 to 72 hours. The minimal discomfort experienced by cats that are neutered can be lessened with post-operative pain medications and is well worth the endless suffering that is prevented by eliminating homeless kittens.

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MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT SPAYING CATS

Definition of “spay”: Spaying animal means removing the ovaries only (ovariectomy) or removing the ovaries and the uterus (ovario-hysterectomy). Most U.S. veterinarians perform an ovario-hysterectomy. Spaying a kitten, as long as certain precautions are taken under anesthesia, is considered safer than spaying an adult because kittens tend to recover more quickly. We recommend spaying your kitten after six months.

MYTH: Female cats should have at least one litter before having them spayed.

FACT: There is no medical evidence to justify allowing a cat to have a litter before spaying. In fact, spaying female cats eliminates the possibility of developing uterine or ovarian cancer and greatly reduces the threat of mammary cancer. Additionally, your pet will not go through heat, which can be very messy and inconvenient.

MYTH: My pet will get fat and lazy.

FACT: Over 50% of cats in the U.S. are overweight or obese. Pets do not need as much food as many owners may think. Over-feeding and lack of exercise will cause your pet to gain weight. Some cats do become more interested in food after being altered, so you may need to feed smaller portions.

MYTH: Spaying is painful to my cat.

FACT: Surgical sterilization is performed under general anesthesia. The procedure itself is not felt by the patient. There may be mild discomfort after the surgery, but most animals return to normal activity within 24 to 72 hours. The minimal discomfort experienced by cats that are spayed can be lessened with post-operative pain medications and is well worth the endless suffering that is prevented by eliminating homeless kittens.

MYTH: I have good homes available for all of the kittens.

FACT: True, you may have homes for your kittens, but for every home you find, there is one less home available for a shelter kitten. Also, do you have guarantees that the people who adopt your kitten will not breed them and thus add even more cats to the problem? One less litter can make a difference. A litter of kittens have a huge financial cost and immense responsibility.

MYTH: Purebred cats should be bred.

FACT: You are not obligated to breed your cat just because she is purebred. Unless you plan to show your cat for conformation, spaying is highly recommended for her health and well-being.

MYTH: Spaying is too expensive.

FACT: Spay surgery is a one-time cost, and if you factor in the many benefits, such as improved health throughout your cat's lifetime, it is a relatively small charge. Keep in mind most kittens/cats from a shelter or rescue will come spayed!

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Greenbrier Animal Hospital
11040 Cedar Lake Road
Minnetonka, MN 55305
952-542-1012

KITTEN CHECK LIST

☐ **Food:** Your kitten should be fed a diet that is formulated kittens. Kittens should be fed 2-3 times per day. Leave the food down for 20 minutes and take it away after that time or when the kitten walks away. Starting your kitten on scheduled feedings now will make it easier to monitor how much your cat is eating as an adult. Switching to adult cat food at the right time is also important, we recommend switching your cat to adult cat food between 7 and 9 months. Some cats prefer to eat wet or dry kibble. It is a good idea to give both forms of food to your kitten so they can get acclimated to both kinds.

☐ **Litter box and Litter:** Select a litter box that is shallow enough for your kitten to easily get in and out of. You should have one more litter box than the number of cats you have in your home (ex. two cats should have a minimum of three boxes). The litter boxes should be placed in various areas around the house, and if you have a multi-level home, there should be at least one box per level. You should also offer your kitten both covered and uncovered litter pans. Litter box liners should be avoided. Select a non-scented, low dust litter. If changing brands of litter, be sure to mix the two litters together to slowly transition your kitten to the new litter. Litter boxes should be scooped out at least once per day, so using a clumping litter is best for this purpose. If using a regular clay litter, solid waste should be scooped out at least daily and the entire box should be emptied and cleaned weekly. If your male cat (very rarely female) becomes very vocal in the litter box, and is unable to procedure urine or urinating small amounts, this is a medical emergency. Please contact our office, or if it is after business hours, contact Affiliated Emergency Veterinary Services.

☐ **Carrier:** All cats in the household should have their own carrier. Choose a hard plastic or nylon mesh carrier that suits the size of your cat; you want it to be large enough for your cat to sit or lie comfortably, but not too large that it shifts easily around in it. Carriers that have a front opening and top opening are ideal. Some cats need to be picked up out of the top, and some like to come out on their own. You may need to purchase another carrier when your kitten becomes full grown. We

STRONGLY recommend all cats come in carriers for the veterinarian visits. Vet visits can be very stressful for some cats. This way they will not be a flight risk, and will have their own safe space from the other animals.



☐ **Scratching Post:** Your kitten should be given a variety of scratching posts to find the texture that your kitten prefers. Some kittens prefer posts that stand vertical, while others prefer items that lay flat on the floor. Encourage your kitten to scratch these items by gently rubbing their front paws on the post to “show” them how to use them. Sometimes sprinkling catnip on or around the post will attract your cat to the scratching post. If your kitten is scratching furniture, carpet or other items in your home that are not appropriate, you may place double-sided tape on those items or squirt your kitten with water when you catch them scratching. If scratching is still an issue, there is also a product called “Soft Paws.” They are plastic adapters that can be glued over their nails to prevent damaging furniture. They will need to be reapplied about once a month.

☐ **Cat Tree:** Cat trees have a very important role to play in a cat’s life. They encourage many major functions, which are invaluable to a cat’s well-being. The climbing poles double up as scratching posts, allowing the cat not only to take care of their claws and exercise the surrounding muscles, but also to leave their scent on. The climbing enables a cat to get exercise and is the closest thing to climbing a tree (a natural everyday action for an outdoor cat) and enables the cat to feel secure in a high place away from people or dogs, looking down on it’s territory.

❑ **Grooming:** All cats should be brushed regularly. Long-haired cats may need to be professionally groomed from time to time, at an early age start a relationship with a groomer. Be sure to play with your kitten's ears, eyes, mouth and feet regularly to get them used to having those areas touched. Most kittens do not need to be bathed, and usually they do not like to be bathed which can make for a bad experience for both you and your kitten. Grooming wipes can be used for small messes on your kitten's fur. Here are some items you should purchase for grooming your kitten:

- Brush or comb appropriate for your kitten's coat
- Toothbrush and toothpaste (never use human toothpaste, brushing should be done daily)
- Nail trimmer and a styptic powder (We have *Kwik Stop* available for purchase)

❑ **Treats:** Treats should be fed minimally to your kitten. Catnip or "cat grass" can be offered, but can cause an upset stomach in some cats. Some cats are not treat motivated, some like to be brushed, while others may have a favorite toy, experiment to find out what your cat likes.



❑ **Toys:** Your kitten should be offered a variety of toys of various sizes and textures. Cats need to have mental stimulation; find interactive cat toys to keep them interested. There is various types of toys where you are able to put some treats into, or toys they are able to chase like a laser light. Avoid toys with bells that can be chewed off or small toys that could be swallowed which could cause a blockage in the intestines.

dishes are recommended as they can be kept cleaner than plastic. Some cats prefer running water, cat "water fountains" are available. Having water accessible in multiple locations can also help promote cats to drink more water. Try having a water dish where your cat regularly sleeps.

❑ **Bowls:** You will need a bowl for food and a bowl for water. Ceramic or metal



❑ **Collar and ID tag:** If you choose for your cat to wear a collar, break-away collars designed for cats are recommended. Your ID tag should include your current contact information. We also recommend microchipping your kitten. A microchip is a form of permanent identification that is injected under the skin. If you move or change number remember to update your cat's microchip information.

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Current Concerns with Grain-Free & Boutique Diets

Summary: Canine diets containing lentils, peas, other legumes, white potatoes, and sweet potatoes have recently been linked to a heart disease called Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM) in various breeds of dogs. This heart disease is usually undetectable on physical exam, unless it progresses to heart failure which can be fatal. Taurine deficiency can be a cause of DCM and is sometimes a component of this current issue. Grain-free diets contain the above ingredients at higher rates than traditional, grain-inclusive dog foods, so are more frequently causing disease. Diet change is recommended immediately if your dog is on a grain-free diet or ANY diet containing the above ingredients. Further testing may be warranted if your dog has any symptoms of heart disease (heart murmur, coughing, exercise intolerance, lethargy, etc) – please consult your veterinarian if you have any concerns.

How to choose a new food:

- **Grain inclusive:** Be sure to choose a diet that is NOT grain-free. For the vast majority of dogs, grain-free diets are not medically necessary. The push for grain-free diets was born in marketing campaigns from smaller, boutique companies to set themselves apart from larger, more established brands.
- **Avoid implicated ingredients:** Be sure to look at nutrition labels to be certain that the new diet does not contain lentils, peas (or pea protein), other legumes (like chickpeas/garbanzo beans), white potatoes, and sweet potatoes.
- **Taurine addition not sufficient:** Many diets that have been implicated in causing disease are now advertising added taurine. This is **NOT** sufficient as many dogs developing DCM have normal blood taurine levels.
- **Research and Veterinary Nutritionist:** Choose a diet that is manufactured with rigorous quality control and research behind the formulation. The best way to ensure that your diet meets these recommendations is to follow the guidelines developed by a large number of the world's leading experts in veterinary nutrition, WSAVA (World Small Animal Veterinary Association). Please ask for these guidelines if interested.

Please be sure to let us know if you have any other specific questions, or if you need advice on specific foods or how much to feed after you transition. We will continue to keep you updated on this issue as it develops and we learn more – research is currently underway! For now, we don't want any of our patients affected and would rather be safe than sorry!

Brands We Recommend (as very few of their foods are grain-free or contain implicated ingredients):
Royal Canin, Purina, Hills Science Diet, Eukanuba, Iams