

NEW KITTEN INFORMATION PACKET

Congratulations! You are about to embark on a fun and rewarding journey of raising a kitten! Whether you are experienced with cats or a first-time cat owner, this packet will supply you with the most current information and advice about how to raise your new friend. If you have any questions during or after your visit, please feel free to ask one of our doctors or technicians. We are here to help!

FLEA & TICK PREVENTION

Flea's & ticks are 2 of the most frequent pet care concerns. Prevention is the best defense against these parasites. Fortunately, today we have very effective flea and tick preventatives that have a wide margin of safety and are easy to administer. Here at Goshen Animal Clinic we offer a variety of preventatives that will fit you and your pet's lifestyle. We recommend Flea & Tick Prevention year around for the best health of your pet.

INTESTINAL PARASITES

Intestinal worms can be a serious problem in young kittens. Hookworms can cause anemia and roundworms can lead to poor growth and development. Intestinal parasites are only occasionally life-threatening in adult cats, and are usually seen in debilitated animals or those that are immunosuppressed. We recommend Intestinal Parasite Prevention year around for the best health of your pet.

HEARTWORMS

Heartworm disease is a serious and potentially fatal disease in pets in the United States and many other parts of the world. It is caused by foot-long worms (heartworms) that live in the heart, lungs and associated blood vessels of affected pets, causing severe lung disease, heart failure and damage to other organs in the body. Heartworm disease in cats is very different from heartworm disease in dogs. The cat is an atypical host for heartworms, and most worms in cats do not survive to the adult stage. Cats with adult heartworms typically have just one to three worms, and many cats affected by heartworms have no adult worms. While this means heartworm disease often goes undiagnosed in cats, it's important to understand that even immature worms cause real damage in the form of a condition known as heartworm associated respiratory disease (HARD). Moreover, the medication used to treat heartworm infections in dogs cannot be used in cats, so prevention is the only means of protecting cats from the effects of heartworm disease.

THE BENEFITS OF SPAYING OR NEUTERING YOUR CAT

Each year millions of healthy and lovable cats and kittens are euthanized at shelters and humane societies in our country because their numbers greatly exceed the number of available homes. Overpopulation devalues the quality of life for all pets. Many cats are surrendered to



humane societies or abandoned at the age of 5-6 months. At this age they have outgrown their kitten cuteness and are beginning to exhibit adult behaviors such as territorial marking. While spaying (females) and neutering (males) cannot make them remain eternally kittens (at least size-wise), sterilization can eliminate a number of annoying behaviors, such as:

- The howling, pacing, and house soiling of a cat in heat. (A heat can last up to 21 days and can occur three or more times a year).
- The caterwauling of toms looking for romance outside the house is eliminated.
- The urge to roam to find a mate which may involve travelling long distances, getting into cat fights, upsetting neighbors, getting hit by a car all of which may result in possible injury or death.
- Urine-marking. The intact male's urine is especially foul-smelling. Both sexes can engage in territorial spraying
- Neutering your male cat prevents testicular cancer and some prostate problems.

An altered cat is likely to be a calmer, healthier, more content pet. Studies show that spayed and neutered cats have average life expectancies twice as long as those of unsplayed and unneutered cats.

MICROCHIPPING

Even the most experienced and diligent pet owner is at risk for losing their cat. While collars and tags are important and certainly beneficial when worn by your pet, they are subject to breaking, fading, becoming scratched, and even falling off. If this occurs, there is no way to determine to whom your cat belongs. Microchipping is a permanent means of identification, and the best possible way of bringing your lost or stolen best friend back to you. A microchip is a rice-grain sized electronic chip enclosed in a glass case that is injected under the skin of your cat using a hypodermic needle. If your cat is ever lost and brought to a veterinary hospital or shelter, one of the first procedures performed is to scan for a microchip. Though no one wants to suffer the heartbreak of losing a pet, microchipping helps to create a happy reunion. Microchipping can be done at any time.

PREVENT ACCIDENTAL POISONINGS

Have you taken inventory of your medicine cabinets lately? Are you properly storing lawn and garden pesticide containers? When you tidy up around the house, do you put food, liquor, and tobacco products safely out of harm's way? These precautions are second nature to households with children, but homes with animals must be just as secure.

Aspirin and other pain relievers are in almost every home, and these poisonings can be severe. When aspirin is prescribed for animals, the dosage must be strictly followed. Too much aspirin can lead to anemia and bleeding stomach ulcers. Ibuprofen and naproxen will cause painful gastrointestinal problems.



One 200mg ibuprofen tablet is toxic to a small dog. Never give acetaminophen (Tylenol) to a cat or dog. The drug affects cat's oxygen carriage in the blood and it produces severe depression and produces abdominal pain in dogs. If not quickly eliminated from the body, just two extra strength tablets in 24 hours will mostly likely kill a small pet.

Clinical signs in cats develop within one to two hours and include excessive salivation, paw and facial swelling, depression, and ash-grey gums. In dogs, watch for anorexia, vomiting, depression, and abdominal pain. High doses are usually fatal.

Neurological poisons can also be present in lawn and garden pesticides, insecticidal aerosols, dips and shampoo products. Signs of toxicity include apprehension, excessive salivation, urination, defecation, vomiting and diarrhea, tremors, seizures, hyper-excitability or depression and pinpoint pupils. If an animal has absorbed enough of any enough of any neurological toxin, sudden death may be the only sign.

Coumarins/Coumadins, most recognizable as D-Con, a rat and mouse poison, affect the ability of the blood to clot. Mice that consume the poisoned grain essentially bleed to death. Your pets will be affected the same way, and the severity of the symptoms often depends on the amount ingested. Cats that eat poisoned mice can also become ill if the levels of poison are high enough. If you find an empty box of rat poison bring your pet into the veterinarian immediately. Tell them about the recent exposure so they can implement the proper monitoring protocols. Additionally, if you see labored breathing, anorexia, nosebleeds, bloody urine or feces and pinpoint hemorrhages on the gums, take your pet to the veterinarian immediately.

Garbage, though often not regarded as poisonous, contains toxins that are produced by bacteria fermenting the garbage. Rapid and severe signs include vomiting, blood diarrhea, painful abdominal distention, shivering, shock, and collapse.

How should pets be protected from these poisons? Some very simple rules to follow are:

- Properly dispose of and store all pesticide containers up and out of sight of your pets. Make sure the lids are tight and the containers are undamaged.
- Use cords or locking lids for garbage cans. Put them in a heavy frame to prevent knockdown.
- Keep pets off lawns sprayed with chemicals. Consult with the lawn care company for proper information on drying time and compounds used. Wash pets' feet with mild soap and water if exposed.
- Keep your pets out of vegetable and flower gardens.
- Encase compost piles or use commercially made containers.
- Never assume that a human drug is applicable to an animal unless a veterinarian instructs you to use it.



What is poisonous?

Here is a quick reference guide to the more common house and garden plants and foods that are toxic to most all animals and children. If you have these plants or foods, you need not dispose of them—just keep them away from pets and children. (*Substances are especially dangerous and can be fatal.) If you suspect your animal may have ingested any of the substances on this list or if your pet shows any abnormal behavior (vomiting, diarrhea, staggering, etc.), you should contact your veterinarian immediately. Take a sample of the suspected toxin and its packaging with you to the veterinarian.

Cardiovascular Toxins

- Avocado
- Japanese pieris
- Yew
- Azalea (entire rhododendron family)
- Kalanchoe
- Autumn crocus (Colchicum autumnale)
- Lil-of-the-valley
- Bleeding heart
- Milkweed
- Castor bean
- Mistletoe berries
- Foxglove
- Mountain Laurel Oleander
- Hyacinth bulbs
- Rosary Pea
- Hydrangea
- Tobacco Products

Gastrointestinal Toxins

- Avocado
- Chocolate
- Iris corms
- Amaryllis bulb
- Chrysanthemum
- Lily
- Azalea
- Clematis Crocus bulb
- Macadamia nuts
- Autumn crocus
- Croton
- Mistletoe berries
- Bird of Paradise
- Cyclamen Bulb
- Moldy foods
- Bittersweet Boxwood
- Dumb Cane
- Narcissus, daffodil
- Buckeye Bulbs
- Eggplant
- Onions
- Buttercup (Ranunculus)
- Elephant's ear
- Pencil cactus/plant potato
- Caladium
- English Ivy
- Rosary Pea
- Cannabis (Marijuana)
- Hyacinth bulbs
- Spurge
- Castor beans
- Holly berries
- Tomatoes (leaves and stem)

Respiratory Toxins

- Chinese sacred or heavenly bamboo
- English Ivy

Toxins that Affect the Blood

- Onions
- Garlic



Neurological Toxins

- Alcohol (all beverages, ethanol, methanol, isopropyl)
- Chrysanthemum
- Morning glory
- Amaryllis bulb
- Crocus bulb, delphinium, larkspur, monkshood
- Moldy foods
- Azalea
- Eggplant
- Tobacco products
- Bleeding heart
- Jimson weed
- Potato (leaves and stem)
- Buckeye caffeine castor bean
- Lupine species
- Tomatoes (leaves and stem)
- Chocolate
- Macadamia nuts
- Choke cherry, unripe berries
- Marijuana (Cannabis)

Kidney/Organ Failure Toxins

- Amanita mushrooms
- Day lily
- Oak
- Anthurium
- Elephant's ear
- Rhubarb leaves
- Asiatic lily
- Easter lily
- Scheffelera
- Begonia
- Grapes/raisins
- Shamrock
- Calla lily
- Jack-in-the-pulpit
- Star-gazer Lily
- Castor beans
- Lantana



Vaccination Schedule for Kittens

FVRCP Vaccine = F: Feline

VR= Viral Rhinotracheitis-upper respiratory disease with symptoms including fever, sneezing, eye and nasal discharge and loss of appetite.

C= Calicivirus- upper respiratory disease causing ulcers and blisters on the tongue and pneumonia. Even with treatment cats are still infectious to other animals. Chronic life long eye and nasal discharge and severe dental disease occur in patients that contract this virus.

P= Panleukopenia (aka Feline Parvo):This virus is resistant to treatment and the infection rate is 90-100% after exposure. Cats with this virus become severely dehydrated from vomiting and diarrhea. Medical treatment is absolutely necessary to improve survival rate.

FeLv =(Feline Leukemia Vaccine):

This vaccine prevents Feline Leukemia from attacking the immune system. The disease is easily passed from cat to cat during casual contact and in multi cat households

Rabies

Rabies is a deadly virus spread to people from the saliva on infected animals. It is spread from animal to animal through bite wounds.

With each visit a "well patient" exam is performed to ensure your new pet does not have any birth defects and also is developing properly.

6-8 weeks of age: FVRCP booster, Advantage Multi and Deworming

A Feline Leukemia and FIV test will be performed before vaccinations are administered to ensure the health of your kitten before being vaccinated.

Kittens are vaccinated every 3 weeks with the FVRCP vaccine to protect against the diseases listed above and ensure protection for weakened immune systems as kittens grow. Your kitten will also receive a deworming to protect both your new pet and your family from parasites. A weight appropriate dose of Advantage Multi will be sent home to protect against Fleas, Intestinal Parasites, Ear Mites and Feline Heartworm disease for which there is no treatment or cure.

9-12 weeks of age: FVRCP Booster, Deworming, Advantage Multi and 1st FeLV

At this appointment your kitten will receive a Feline Leukemia vaccine. This vaccine is imperative for outdoor cats and multi cat households. Goshen Animal Clinic recommends vaccinating even indoor cats for this virus to protect them in the event your cat is ever outside or exposed to unvaccinated cats.



12-14 weeks of age: FVRCP booster, FeLv booster, Deworming and Advantage Multi

At this visit the technician will send home a fecal container. Please obtain a stool sample from your pet's litter box so that we can determine if there are any intestinal parasites that need to be treated. This sample will be sent to our lab at your last kitten visit at 15 weeks of age.

15-16 weeks of age:

Final visit to receive Rabies Vaccine and Advantage Multi

6 months of age:

At this time, a spay or neuter is performed. This is also an ideal time to microchip your pet.

*Please note that up to date vaccinations are **REQUIRED** for all animals in boarding and grooming.*



Preventing Litter Box Problems

Keeping your cat's litter box up to his standards is very important. The following suggestions should keep your cat from "thinking outside the box."

Location, location, location

Most people tend to place the litter box in an out-of-the-way spot to minimize odor and prevent cat litter from being tracked throughout the house.

But if the litter box ends up in the basement next to an appliance or on a cold cement floor, your cat may be less than pleased.

So you may have to compromise.

- Keep the litter box in a spot that gives your cat some privacy yet is also conveniently located. If the box is too hard to get to, especially for a kitten or an elderly cat, he just may not use it.
- Avoid placing litter boxes next to noisy or heat-radiating appliances, like the furnace or the washing machine. The noise can make a cat nervous, while the warmth of a dryer or furnace can magnify the litter box smell, which could make him stay away from it.
- Put the box far away from his food and water bowls. Cats don't like that smell too near their food and may not use the box.
- Place at least one litter box on each level of your house. That way your cat has options if access to his primary box is blocked (the basement door is closed or your dinner party has him holed up in the bedroom.) If you have more than one cat, provide litter boxes in several locations so that one cat can't ambush another cat using the litter box.
- If you keep the litter box in a closet or a bathroom, be sure the door is wedged open from both sides to prevent your cat from being trapped inside or locked out. Depending on the location, you might consider cutting a hole in a closet door and adding a pet door.

Pick of the litter

Research has shown that most cats prefer fine-grained litters, presumably because they have a softer feel. The new scoopable (clumping) litters usually have finer grains than the typical clay litter and are very popular because they really keep down the odor. But high-quality, dust-free clay litters are fairly small-grained and may be perfectly acceptable to your cat.

There are several different types of cat litter on the market. The most popular ones are traditional clay litter, scooping/clumping litter, crystal-based/silica gel litter, and plant-derived/bio-degradable litter.

If your cat has previously been an outdoor one and prefers dirt, you can keep him out of your houseplants by placing medium-sized rocks on top of the soil and/or by mixing some potting soil



with your regular litter. A cat who rejects all types of commercial litters may be quite happy with sand. Once you find a litter your cat likes, stick with it. Switching litters constantly could result in your cat not using the litter box.

Smelling like a rose

Many people used scented litter to mask litter box odors, but those scents can put off many cats. For the same reason, it's not a good idea to place a room deodorizer or air freshener near the litter box.

A thin layer of baking soda placed on the bottom of the box will help absorb odors without repelling your cat. And if you keep the box scrupulously clean, it shouldn't smell.

If you find the litter box odor offensive, your cat, with his keen sense of smell, probably finds it even more offensive and won't want to go there.

How many?

The general rule of thumb is one box for each cat plus one more. Then none of them will ever be prevented from eliminating in the litter box because it's already occupied.

It's not possible to designate a personal litter box for each cat in your household, as cats may use any litter box that's available. That means a cat may occasionally refuse to use a litter box after another cat has been in it. In this case, you'll need to keep all of the litter boxes extremely clean, and you might even need to add additional boxes. However, it's best not to place all the boxes in one location because your cats will think of them as one big box and ambushing another cat will still be possible.

Under cover

Some people prefer to provide their cats with a covered litter box, but doing so may introduce some potential problems. To discover which type your cat prefers, you may want to experiment by offering both types at first.

Some cats, especially those who are timid or like privacy might prefer a covered litter box. Others will not, especially if it's not clean. Covered boxes can decrease the amount of litter that flies from the box when your cat buries his business.

Pros and cons:

- You may forget to clean the litter box as frequently as you should, because the dirty litter is "out of sight, out of mind."



- A covered litter box traps odors inside, so you'll need to clean it more often than an open one. A dirty, covered litter box is to your cat what a port-a-potty is to you!
- It may not allow a large cat sufficient room to turn around, scratch, dig, or position himself in the way he wants.
- It may make it easier for another cat to lay in wait and "ambush" the user as he exits the box.

Other types of litter boxes

There is a wide variety of litter boxes on the market today. Keep in mind that some fancy litter box innovations are for the owner's convenience, not the cats. In fact, some of these features may actually turn your cat off. It's really best to keep it simple—a basic box, litter, and a scoop.

Keeping it clean

To meet the needs of the most discriminating cat, you should scoop feces out of the litter box daily. How often you actually change (replace) the litter depends on the number of cats you have, the number of litter boxes, and the type of litter you use.

Twice a week is a general guideline for replacing clay litter, but depending on the circumstances, you may need to replace it every other day or only once a week.

If you clean the litter box daily, you might only need to change clumping litter every two to three weeks. If you notice an odor or if much of the litter is wet or clumped, it's time for a change. Scrub the box every time you change the litter. Use mild dish detergent to clean it, as products with ammonia or citrus oils can turn a cat off, and some cleaning products are toxic to cats.

Liner notes

Box liners are strictly a convenience for the owner; supposedly, the liner can be gathered together and tied just like a garbage bag, but the truth is that most cats shred it to bits while scratching in the box. However, it might work if your cat doesn't work too hard to bury his waste.

Depth of litter

Some people think that the more litter they put in the box, the less often they'll have to clean it, but that's a mistake. Most cats won't use litter that's more than about two inches deep. In fact, some long-haired cats actually prefer less litter and a smooth, slick surface, such as the bottom of the litter box. Adding extra litter isn't a substitute for scooping and scrubbing.



"Litter training" cats

There's really no such thing as "litter training" a cat in the same way one would housetrain a dog. You actually don't need to teach your cat what to do with a litter box; instinct will generally take over. You do need to provide an acceptable, accessible litter box, using the suggestions above. It's not necessary to take your cat to the litter box and move her paws back and forth in the litter. In fact, we don't recommend it, as such an unpleasant experience is likely to make her afraid of the litter box and you.

If you move, however, you will need to show your cat where the box is, though his sensitive nose will probably find it first.

Solving problems

If your cat begins to go to the bathroom outside the litter box, your first call should always be to your veterinarian. Many medical conditions can cause a change in a cat's litter box habits. If your veterinarian examines your cat and gives him a clean bill of health, your cat may have a behavior problem that needs to be solved.



Feline Behavior Problems: House Soiling

House soiling is the most common behavior problem reported by cat owners. The solution to your cat's problem will depend on the underlying causes of their behavior.

Why do cats eliminate outside the litter box?

Your cat may have litter box trouble for any number of reasons, including medical problems, an aversion to the litter box, or a preference for urinating or defecating in places outside the box.

Medical Problems

Any medical condition that interferes with a cat's normal urination or defecation behavior can cause litter box problems. Inflammation of the urinary tract, for instance, can make urinating painful and increase the frequency and urgency of urination. These experiences can cause a cat to urinate or defecate outside the litter box, particularly if he associates the litter box with pain. Kidney and thyroid diseases as well as diabetes mellitus are also possible culprits in a failure to use the litter box, as they often lead a cat to drink more and urinate more frequently. Similarly, digestive tract problems may make it painful for a cat to defecate, increase the frequency or urgency, and decrease a cat's control over defecation. Finally, age-related diseases that interfere with a cat's mobility or with his cognitive functions can influence his ability to get to the litter box in time.

Litter Box Aversions

An aversion to the litter box can also lead to house soiling. It could be the box, the litter, the location of the box, or all three that your cat finds unsavory.

A cat with an aversion to her litter box will usually eliminate on a variety of surfaces. You may find puddles of urine or feces on soft surfaces like carpets, beds, or clothing, or on hard surfaces like tile floors or bathtubs. Depending on how much your cat wants to avoid the litter box, he may continue to use it, but only inconsistently.

Inappropriate Site Preferences

Your cat may dislike something about your litter box, but it's also possible he or she just prefers eliminating in another spot. In this case, the cat may have a preference for a type of surface or for a location. Cats that prefer certain surfaces usually stick with that choice. For example, a cat that finds it pleasing to eliminate on soft surfaces like clothing or carpets would be unlikely to use tile floors. Cats that prefer an alternate location often have an aversion to the current litter box location. As with aversions, cats that prefer certain surfaces or locations may continue to use the litter box inconsistently. One cause for house soiling may lead to another. For example, a cat with a urinary tract disorder that can't make it to the litter box in time will urinate wherever she is. She may then develop a preference for the new site and continue to eliminate there.



Urine Spraying

When your cat rubs against your leg with his face, or scratches his scratching post, he is also depositing his scent from the glands in his cheeks and paws. Another equally normal but less pleasant marking behavior is urine spraying - the deposition of small amounts of urine around a given area. By spraying small amounts of urine around an area, a cat announces his or her presence, establishes or maintains territorial boundaries, or advertises that he or she is ready to mate.

Cats usually spray on vertical surfaces, like the backs of chairs or walls. A spraying cat will stand, lift its tail and quiver, then spray small puddles of urine in several consistent locations (see Figure 1). Cats don't squat to spray, as they do to urinate. Cats that spray are usually unneutered males and, to a lesser extent, unsprayed females, but 10% of neutered males and 5% of neutered females also spray. In households with more than seven cats, it's likely that one or more of the cats will spray.

Cats may spray when they perceive a threat to their territory, such as when a new cat enters the home or when outside cats are nearby. Alternatively, cats may spray out of frustration with their circumstances, including such conditions as restrictive diets or insufficient playtime (a reaction that owners often misperceive as revenge), or in response to the smell of new furniture and carpet.

What you can do to stop the litter box problems

First, address the problem promptly. The longer the behavior persists, the more likely it is to become a habit.

Second, if you have more than one cat, identify the culprit. You may need to separate them to find the responsible party. Alternatively, your veterinarian can provide you with a special non-toxic stain given by mouth that will show up in the urine. In cases of defecation outside the box, you can feed one cat small pieces (about twice the size of a sesame seed) of a brightly colored non-toxic child's crayon that will show up in the feces.

Third, if you find urine puddles in the house, you'll need to distinguish between spraying and other forms of house soiling. Watch your cat for signs of spraying or set up a video camera to keep an eye on the situation when you're not around.

Once you have identified the house-soiling cat, it is wise to take him to your veterinarian for a thorough physical examination and appropriate diagnostic tests to check for underlying medical problems. Cats with medical conditions may not always act sick.



Identify the Cause

Once medical causes have been ruled out, your detective work begins. Here are some patterns that may point to a cause:

- Does she prefer a certain type of surface? If so, it may be possible to modify your litter to match it. If she likes soft surfaces like carpeting, buy a softer, finer litter, and put a carpet remnant in her box. If she has a penchant for smooth, shiny surfaces, consider putting tiles in her box, covered with only a small amount of litter. Over time more litter can be added.
- Is there a certain location she prefers? She may have developed a preference for a new area because something bothered her about the old area. Try placing a litter box in her “preferred” location. Once she reliably uses it, gradually move the box just a few inches a day back to the desired location. Stop moving the box if she stops using it; instead simply move it back to the spot where she last reliably used it, then gradually begin moving it again.
- If you have multiple pets, does another animal terrorize your cat while she’s in the litter box or as she exits? This may make your cat afraid to use the box. If you currently use a covered box, replace it with one that gives her a 360-degree view. This will give her more confidence while she’s in the box and make her less prone to ambush. Also, position the box so that she has more than one way out (i.e. don’t have the box surrounded on three sides). Finally, place multiple boxes in multiple locations to give your cat more options.
- When your cat uses the box, does he cry, refuse to bury his waste, perch on the edge of the box without touching the litter, or eliminate right near the box? If so, first be sure the box is clean. Some cats refuse to use a box containing any urine or feces whatsoever.
- Your cat may dislike the litter you use, especially if you’ve recently and suddenly changed brands. If you must switch brands, do so gradually, adding small amounts of new litter to the old. Most cats prefer unscented litter.
- The box itself may be the offender. Larger cats need bigger boxes, and kittens and elderly cats need boxes with low sides. Although humans like covered boxes for reducing odor and stray litter, from your cat’s point of view, covers hold odors in. You may need to purchase several types of boxes and several types of litter to determine which combination your cat likes best. Provide as many boxes as there are cats in the house, plus one. This decreases competition and gives each cat a box of his or her own.

Will medications stop my cat from house soiling?

Anti-anxiety drugs are more likely to prevent spraying behavior than other types of house soiling. Whenever it is used, medication can only be part of the solution, and must be used in conjunction with environmental changes. Also, medication can have potentially damaging side effects, and not all cats are good candidates. Cats placed on medication for long periods must be monitored closely by a veterinarian.

What can I use to clean my cat-soiled carpet, couch, and other household items?

Cats will re-soil and spray areas they have marked with their scent, so cleaning cat-soiled items is crucial for breaking the cycle of elimination. Cleaning is most effective when it’s done soon after an item was soiled, and odors must be neutralized, not just deodorized, to escape a cat’s keen sense of smell. Avoid cleaning products containing ammonia or vinegar as they smell like urine and can be irritating.



What other methods should I consider to stop litter box problems and spraying?

- Sheets of plastic, newspaper, or sandpaper, electronic mats that deliver harmless, mild shocks, or a carpet runner with the nubs facing up can be used to discourage your cat from entering a soil-prone area.
- Try changing the significance of a soiled area. Cats prefer to eat and eliminate in separate areas, so try placing food bowls and treats in previously soiled areas. Playing with your cat in that space and leaving toys there may also be helpful.
- Try denying your cat access to a given area by closing doors, or by covering the area with furniture or plants. Baby gates will not keep a cat out of a room.
- Catch him in the act. A bell on a breakaway collar tells you his whereabouts. If you can catch him within the first seconds of his elimination routine, startle him with a water gun or shake a jar of pennies, so that he associates being startled with those actions. It is important that you startle rather than scare him; fear will only worsen the problem. Moreover, if you catch him after he's eliminated, your window of opportunity is gone—you must catch him just as he's about to eliminate.
- Consulting with a veterinary behaviorist may provide important insight into the cause of inappropriate elimination and potential strategies to address this common problem.

How can I stop my cat from spraying?

- Because spraying is different than other types of house soiling, different tactics are necessary to manage it.
- Consider spaying or neutering. If your cat is intact, consider having him or her neutered or spayed. Cats are often driven to spray by hormones, and neutering or spaying will reduce the influence of hormones on this behavior.
- Identify and remove stimuli. Identify stimuli that cause your cat to spray. If outside cats are responsible, motion detectors that trigger sprinklers can be used to deter them from coming onto your property. Additionally, you can discourage your cat from looking outside by closing blinds or shades, or by placing double-sided tape or electronic mats that deliver mild shocks onto your windowsills.
- Ease her frustrations. If you are introducing a new diet, for instance, do it gradually or discontinue it until the spraying is under control. If boredom may be a cause, increase your cat's playtime.
- Separate feuding cats. Spraying can result from territorial disputes between cats in the same household. They may need to be separated and reintroduced slowly, using food treats to reward and encourage peaceful behavior.
- Clean sprayed areas. Applying odor neutralizers anywhere your cat has sprayed may prevent him from spraying there again. Another useful commercial product is Feliway, a synthetic pheromone that, when applied to household surfaces, mimics the scent of cat cheek gland secretions. Many cats will not spray on areas that have this scent.

"He's doing it to punish me!"

It's common for owners to think cats soil in inappropriate places as a way of taking revenge, but cats probably don't have the kind of sophisticated cognitive abilities that they would need to make these tit-for-tat calculations. What's more, although humans are disgusted by urine and feces, cats don't see them as unpleasant, so they would be unlikely to use waste products as weapons against their humans.



House soiling can be a frustrating problem, but you should never hit, kick, or scream at a cat. Punishments like these are not only ineffective, the anxiety they cause may actually worsen the house soiling problem. Similarly, rubbing a cat's face in its excrement is ineffective because cats are not disgusted by their urine and feces, and they cannot make the connection between the treatment and the mess, even moments after they've done it.

Conclusions

A common and frustrating problem, inappropriate elimination can be difficult to control. A full resolution depends on early intervention, followed by detective work to determine the cause of the behavior, and time and effort on your part to solve the problem. In partnership with veterinarians, both cats and the people who love them can live in harmony and good health.



How to Train Your Cat to Love the Carrier

Carriers are important to transport your cat, but how can you make it enjoyable for your cat and not so stressful?

In order to transport your cat safely he must be comfortable being confined to a carrier. The problem is most cats only see their carrier when it is time to visit the veterinarian, or go to the boarding kennel. These unpleasant experiences can create a negative association with the carrier, and many cats begin running away each time the carrier is brought out of the closet. Rather than fight with your cat, or avoiding taking him into the veterinarian we can train him to be comfortable in his carrier.

Begin by leaving the carrier in a neutral location in your house.

If the carrier is out more frequently your cat will habituate to its presence. If your carrier has a door, take it off. You can hide toys, or special treats in the carrier to encourage your cat to explore inside. We want the carrier to become a “room” where your cat feels secure going in and out. Periodically feeding your cat, or offering a small amount of canned cat food on a dish in the back of the carrier will also encourage him to go in. The initial goal is to change the association your cat has with the carrier and allow him to go in and out at will.

Once you see your cat going in and out of the carrier comfortably, maybe even relaxing in the carrier, you can replace the door. Begin offering your cat a small amount of canned cat food on a dish inside the carrier once or twice a day. Close the door once your cat is inside the carrier and allow him to eat. If your cat will not walk inside the carrier by himself, you can try to gently place him in the kennel, but do not force the issue. He may need more time at step one. Open the door when he has finished his snack. As your cat continues to go in willingly to eat his snack, you can begin leaving him in the carrier for brief periods of time after he is through eating. You will also want to begin picking the carrier up, walking around the house, then placing the kennel back on the floor to release your cat.

It's not a difficult process to carrier train our cats, but it does take planning. The goal is to use the carrier more like the cats room where he eats, plays with toys, and has snacks vs. the scary box he is placed in when it is time for a visit to the veterinarian.



Teach Your Cat to Enjoy Being Held

Some cats love being held and others don't! How can you train your cat to enjoy being held and touched? We will give you tips to do just that.

Whether it is for petting, grooming, nail trims or veterinary exams, some cats become stressed when they are being handled and restrained. Your cat may demonstrate his dislike for the physical interaction by trying to wiggle or squirm out of your arms. He may meow or growl as you are holding him, and the most obvious sign your cat is displeased will be his tail flicking back and forth as you handle him.

Your cat may not enjoy being held, or having the veterinarian examine him, but this is a necessary part of being a cat. It is our job to ensure he is trained to tolerate, if not enjoy, these experiences.

How to train your cat to love being held:

Start your first training session when your cat is relaxed. Invite him up on your lap and begin to pet him in long strokes down his body, scratch his ears, and allow him to rub his face in against your hand. Be sure to include other parts of his body such as his tail, legs, and stomach. Always use long strokes, and a soothing voice. Practice this step three to four times per day for thirty seconds. After your cat demonstrates he is comfortable with having his body petted you are ready to move to the next step.

Pick up your cat and place him in your lap. Have your hands around his shoulders while he sits in your lap for five to ten seconds. Offer him a special treat and allow him to jump back on the floor. If your cat is comfortable with this step and can sit in your lap for brief periods, begin picking up his foot, letting go of the foot and offering him a treat. Repeat this step as you touch his mouth/treat, touch his tail/treat, rub his belly/treat. You want to work in small increments several times per day to increase his tolerance for sitting patiently in your lap as well as having different parts of his body handled. The goal is to keep him within his threshold for tolerating the handling. Do not try to do too much, too soon where he is overwhelmed and attempts to get away.

Incorporate these handling exercises into playtime with your cat. Encourage him to chase one of his toys on a string for several seconds. Take a brief pause, handle his feet and begin playing again. The goal is always touch/treat, or touch/play as we build our cat's tolerance level for handling and restraint. If you find yourself in a situation where your cat is becoming stressed, take a break and resume at a later time.

Practice makes perfect here, so when your cat is comfortable with you holding him, begin to invite others to practice the same steps. Before you know it, your cat will be able to tolerate being held even at the vet's office.



Teach Your Kitten How to Play Nice

A kitten's life is all about play, and play is all about prey. Soon after they open their eyes and hoist themselves up on their teeny paws, kittens start to play. But if you look closely, you'll notice that you have an itty-bitty hunter in your house.

Learning to play nice

A kitten's first playmates are his mother and littermates, and from them he learns how to inhibit his bite. A kitten who is separated from his family too early may not have learned that lesson well enough and doesn't know when to stop. Acceptable behavior can quickly escalate.

In addition, if people use their hands and/or feet instead of toys to play with a young kitten, the kitten may learn that rough play is okay. In most cases, it's not too difficult to teach your kitten or young adult cat that rough play isn't acceptable.

If playing with your kitten evolves from peek-a-boo to professional wrestling in a matter of seconds, follow these tips to keep playtime interesting and reduce the number of trips to the first-aid kit.

- Don't let your kitten play with your hands or feet (or any other body part). This sends the wrong message.
- Use a toy when playing with her. Drag a toy, preferably a fishing pole-type toy that keeps your hands from kitty's mouth and claws, along the floor to encourage your kitten to pounce on it, or throw a toy for her to chase.
- Give your kitten something to wrestle with, like a soft stuffed animal that's about her size, so she can grab it with both front feet, bite it, and kick it with her back feet. This is one of the ways kittens play with each other, especially when they're young. It's also one of the ways they try to play with human feet and hands, so it's important to provide this type of alternative play target.
- Don't hit or yell at your kitten when she nips or pounces. This will only make her fearful of you and she may start to avoid you. The idea is to train her, not punish her.

Discouraging "bad" behavior

Playing is not bad behavior, but you do have to set the rules for your kitten: no biting. Everyone in the household has to be on the same page, too; your kitten can't be expected to learn that it's okay to play rough with dad but not with the baby.

Equip yourself with the right training tools: [toys, toys, toys](#), and a water pistol.

A gnawing problem

As we said, you shouldn't let your kitten play with your body parts. But if you're petting her and she starts gnawing on you, immediately say "uh-uh" and carefully take your hands away. Give her a toy



to play with instead, but be sure she's not gnawing on you when you give her a toy or she'll think she's being rewarded for gnawing. Don't try to pet her again until she's tuckered out and no longer tempted to "kill" your hand.

Gimmie that!

Kittens always seem to want to play with whatever you're using—knitting needles, pencil, telephone antenna. If yours starts "attacking" your utensils, sharply say "uh-uh" to disrupt her behavior. Then give her one of her own toys. Be sure she's not attacking when you give her a toy or she'll think she's being rewarded for biting.

On the hunt

Kittens also like to "hunt" you while you're walking around. They'll jump out from behind a door or under a chair and pounce on your ankles. If she doesn't pounce, praise her with "Good kitty." If she does pounce, use your sharp "uh-uh" to distract her and interrupt her behavior. And offer her an acceptable toy. Be sure she's not pouncing on you when you provide the toy or she'll think she's being rewarded for pouncing.

Pay no attention

Withdraw attention when your kitten doesn't get the message. If the distraction and redirection techniques don't work, the most drastic thing you can do to discourage your cat from rough play is to withdraw all attention.

The best way to withdraw your attention is to walk to another room and close the door long enough for her to calm down. If you pick her up to put her in another room, then you're rewarding her by touching her, so you should always be the one to leave the room.

Remember, your kitten wants to play with you, not just toys, so be sure to set aside time for regular, serious, and safe play sessions.

Adapted from material originally developed by applied animal behaviorists at the Dumb Friends League, Denver, Colorado. All rights reserved.



Cat Declawing Alternatives

Solve your cat scratching problems right away!

There are many solutions to problem cat scratching that do not involve declawing. Since declawing involves ten separate amputations of the distal phalanx, which is comparable to amputating the last joint of a human finger.

Soft Paws Nail Caps for Cats

Developed by a veterinarian, Soft Paws are nail caps that look like a cat's nail, but are hollow inside. The nail caps easily fit over the cat's nail and are secured with a safe, non-toxic adhesive. Soft Paws effectively blunt the claws so that when a cat scratches, no damage occurs. The nail caps stay on for about four to six weeks and fall off with the natural growth of the cat's nails. They are generally very well tolerated by most cats, with most cats not even noticing they are wearing them. Some cats will groom them a bit excessively at first, resulting in them coming off sooner, but any removed nail caps can be easily replaced. Soft Paws should not be used on cats that go outside, since nail caps will blunt the claws and also impede a cat's defenses.

Cat Scratching Posts

Cats will always scratch, it is in their nature. The key is to provide your cat with a post that he/she prefers over your furniture. So what makes a good scratching post?

Height.

The post needs to be tall enough for your cat to stretch and extend in order to get a full and satisfying scratch. The picture to the right shows a good example of a cat getting a "full and satisfying" stretch.

Stability.

The post must be stable. If it wobbles, your cat won't like it, and if it topples over your cat won't want to get near it again. Watch a cat scratch — they hunker down and scratch and pull with such vigor that they need a stable surface to suit their scratching needs.

Material.

The best material for cat scratching posts is sisal fabric. Not sisal rope, but sisal fabric. This woven material provides great texture for shredding — which cats love to do when scratching, and it feels good on their paws. When a cat scratches the sisal material, he can drag his claws down this satisfying



material over and over in a continuous motion. In contrast, sisal rope creates an interrupted scratch — scratch, bump, scratch, bump, scratch, bump. Not very satisfying.

Purrfect Post — a tall, stable, sisal fabric-covered scratching post.

A purrfect example of the right type of scratching post, (which cat post lovers are actually calling legendary), is the Purrfect Post. It encompasses all of the above attributes and is attractive-looking for humans too. This is important, since the post must be in a prominent area of your living space to be effective. The post is designed by a veterinarian and has a money-back guarantee if your cat doesn't absolutely love it.

Location, location, location.

So you find the right scratching post for your cat. Now one of the keys to getting him to use it is to place it in a prominent area of yours, and his, living space. Why? Because one of the reasons cats scratch is to mark their territory, so the post has to be in the places your cat likes to be.

Double-Sided Tape

Double-sided tape, such as Pioneer Pet Sticky Paws on a Roll Cat Deterrent is sticky on both sides. Simply apply it to the objects you would prefer your cat not scratch on, and his natural aversion to stickiness will put an end to the offending behavior. The tape works as an aversion tool, but you still need to provide a place for kitty to scratch — such as a scratching post.

Feliway

Feliway is a synthetic analogue of the feline facial pheromone — sounds confusing, but it is really quite simple. Have you seen cats rubbing their cheeks on an object? What they are doing is depositing some of this facial pheromone on the object and marking it as theirs. This feline facial pheromone can also be thought of as a feel good pheromone. Meaning cats sense this pheromone and it has a calming effect.

FELISCRATCH by FELIWAY

More than 50% of cat owners experience inappropriate scratching in the home. FELISCRATCH by FELIWAY is a new innovative pheromone product. It offers a simple answer to cat's inappropriate scratching in the home by redirecting scratching onto the scratching post. With FELISCRATCH by FELIWAY more than 8/10 exhibiting destructive scratching cats started using their scratching post within the first 7 days. 9/10 newly adopted cats never started scratching when FELISCRATCH by FELIWAY was used.



Cats are territorial by nature, and like to delineate their territorial boundaries. Scratching is one of the ways cat mark their territory. Not only does scratching provide a visual marking of the territory (the shredded material) but also, cats have scent glands on the bottom of their paw pads which deposit a scent discernible only by other cats.

Spraying Feliway on objects you do not want your cat to scratch effectively deposits this feel good pheromone so your cat doesn't feel the need to scratch the object.

You will still need to provide a scratching post so there is a place for your cat to scratch.



My kitten is already becoming destructive. What can be done?

There are three options that you can consider: frequent nail trims, nail shields, and surgical declawing.

The nails may be trimmed according to the instructions above. However, your cat's nails will regrow and become sharp again in about 4-7 days. Therefore, to protect your property, it will be necessary to clip them one to two times per week.

Offering your new pet a scratching post can help defer away from scratching at furniture. There are some commercially available products that are called nail caps. These are generally made of smooth plastic and attach to the end of the nail with special glue. The nails are still present, but the caps prevent them from causing destruction. After 2-4 weeks the nails will grow enough that the caps will be shed. At that time, you should be prepared to replace them.

Surgical declawing is the removal of the nail at its base. This is done under general anesthesia. There is very little post-surgical discomfort, especially when it is performed on a kitten. Contrary to the belief of some, this surgery does not cause lameness or psychological damage. Actually, a declawed cat will not realize the claws are gone and will continue to "sharpen" the claws as normal without inflicting damage to your furniture. This surgery can be done as early as 12 weeks of age or anytime. If you choose to declaw we recommend that it be done the same time as spaying or neutering. Once declawed, your cat should always live indoors since the ability to defend itself is compromised.



When Your Cat Gets the "Midnight Crazyes"

It's 1 a.m. and you're jolted awake by the sound of a trash can lid hitting the floor. You shuffle into your kitchen and there's your cat perched on the kitchen counter - you swear she's grinning at you. She lets out a howl, leaps to the floor, runs sideways, leaps into the air, and pounces on nothing with all her might. Your cat has been gripped by the "midnight crazyes."

The "midnight crazyes" is a popular name for a cat's behavior when she plays and roughhouses in short spurts in the middle of the night. The cat may entertain herself with wild activity or jump on your bed and paw at your feet, elbows, hair and face to get you to join in.

What motivates a cat to such boisterous and disruptive behavior? One theory is that the cat is simply practicing hunting methods, fighting maneuvers, and escape techniques.

"Cats in the wild are active at times when rodents come out, typically after dark," says Sandy Myers, an animal behavior consultant with Narnia Pet Behavior Clinic in Naperville, Ill. "A cat naturally wants to spend her evenings hunting and playing predator games, even if she is a well-fed house pet."

Another theory is that house cats become active at night simply because they aren't getting enough play and exercise during the day.

"Many house cats spend the days alone and indoors while their owners are at work," says Dr. Barbara Simpson, a board certified veterinary behaviorist with the Veterinary Behavior Clinic at Southern Pines, N.C. "When the owner comes home in the evening, the cat wants to play and will be very active."

Late-night activity is especially common in young cats with a lot of energy to spare, and in new kittens who simply do not know any better. "The kitten may have never lived with a human family before and not know that she is expected to sleep through the night," Myers says. "She may also feel a little unsure of her new human family and be uncomfortable about living in unfamiliar surroundings."

Here are some suggestions for coping with a nocturnally active cat.

Help Your Kitten Relax

If your kitten is too anxious or nervous to lie down and sleep at night, you can help her feel more secure by sitting down with her for a while, holding her closely, and gently petting her. Some kittens are also comforted by a softly playing radio tuned to an all-night talk show or soft music station. Others are comforted by having a toy or blanket from their former nest so that the smell from that



familiar place is present where they sleep. Once your kitten is soothed, put her in her own bed and praise her when she stays there.

Provide More Opportunities for Play

Make sure you're meeting your cat's needs for play at appropriate times during the day and early evening. If you're home during the day, take breaks with your cat by spending a few minutes tossing cat toys for her. Try to keep your cat busy and active so that she doesn't sleep for too long during the daytime, at least until she is in the habit of sleeping at night.

If you're away at work from 9 to 5, try to spend some time playing with your cat before you leave for work, and then have another play session after you get home in the evening. Have your last play session about an hour before you go to bed. "If you play a lot with your cat immediately before you go to bed, you will get her all charged up and she won't be able to fall asleep," Meyers notes.

'Evening Proof' Your Home

Try to anticipate the mischief your cat might want to get into while you're asleep and plan accordingly. Put garbage pails, kitchen glassware, lamp cords, computer keyboards, books, and clothing out of harm's way before going to bed.

Confine Your Cat for the Evening

If your cat is especially boisterous or destructive at night, you may need to confine her to a spare bedroom or bathroom for the evening. Make sure your cat is in a big enough space so that she's able to walk around. Provide food, water, a litter box, and scratching post in the same room. If your cat starts whining because she wants to come out, don't give in. "If you do, you will be rewarding the cat for vocalizing and scratching at the door," Simpson says. That means she'll learn that she'll get what she wants if she cries long enough.

Interrupt Bad Behaviors

If you allow your cat to sleep in your bedroom or have free reign of the house at night, you may want to have either a spray bottle or a gun-shaped hair dryer on hand so if your cat wakes you up with her meowing, you can just reach for the hair dryer and blast the cat with some air or water. "Doing so won't hurt the cat, but will simply startle and discourage her from doing the same thing again," Simpson notes.

Punish the specific action, and do it at the beginning of the behavior. "Then once the cat stops meowing in your face, you can then pick her up and snuggle," Myers says. But don't give any attention during the actual bad behavior. "Sometimes pet owners pick up the cat while she is saying 'meow' and in effect they are just reinforcing the meowing," Meyers says.



Keep in mind that it's unrealistic to think your cat should sleep all night if you haven't taught her to do so or if you haven't met her need for play during other times in the day. Remember, cats need recreation and sleep, just as humans do. The trick is coordinating your schedules so both you and your pet can be happy.



Common Household Dangers for Pets

Many common household items can pose a threat to our animal companions—even some items specifically meant for pets could cause health problems.

To protect your pet, simply use common sense and take the same precautions you would with a child.

Although rodent poisons and insecticides are the most common sources of companion animal poisoning, the following list of less common, but potentially toxic, agents should be avoided if at all possible.

- **Antifreeze that contains ethylene glycol** has a sweet taste that attracts animals but is deadly if consumed in even small quantities; one teaspoon can kill a seven-pound cat. Look for antifreeze that contains propylene glycol, which is safe for animals if ingested in small amounts. Ethylene glycol can also be found in common household products like snow globes, so be sure to keep these things out the reach of animals.
- **Cocoa mulch** contains ingredients that can be deadly to pets if ingested. The mulch, sold in garden supply stores, has a chocolate scent that is appetizing to some animals.
- **Chemicals used on lawns and gardens**, such as fertilizer and plant food, can be easily accessible and fatal to a pet allowed in the yard unsupervised.
- **De-icing salts used to melt snow and ice** are paw irritants that can be poisonous if licked off. Paws should be washed and dried as soon as the animal comes in from the snow. Other options include doggie boots with Velcro straps to protect Fido's feet
- **Cans and garbage** can pose a danger when cats or smaller dogs attempt to lick food from a disposed can, sometimes getting their head caught inside the can. To be sure this doesn't happen, squeeze the open end of the can closed before disposing.
- **Traps and poisons** Pest control companies frequently use glue traps, live traps and poisons to kill rodents. Even if you would never use such methods to eliminate rodents, your neighbor might. Dogs and cats can be poisoned if they eat a rodent who has been killed by poison (called secondary poisoning).
- **Human medications**, such as pain killers (including aspirin, acetaminophen and ibuprofen), cold medicines, anti-cancer drugs, anti-depressants, vitamins and diet pills can all be toxic to animals. Keep medicine containers and tubes of ointments and creams away from pets who could chew through them, and be vigilant about finding and disposing of any dropped pills.
- **Poisonous household plants**, including azalea, dieffenbachia (dumb cane), lilies, mistletoe and philodendron.
- **String, yarn, rubber bands and even dental floss** are easy to swallow and can cause intestinal blockages or strangulation.
- **Chocolate** . Though not harmful to people, chocolate products contain substances called methylxanthines that can cause vomiting in small doses, and death if ingested in larger quantities. Darker chocolate contains more of these dangerous substances than do white or milk chocolate. The amount of chocolate that could result in death depends on the type of chocolate and the size of the dog. For smaller breeds, just half an ounce of baking chocolate can be fatal, while a larger dog might survive eating 4 ounces to 8 ounces, though 8 ounces would be extremely dangerous. Coffee and caffeine have similarly dangerous chemicals.



- **Alcohol.** Symptoms of alcohol poisoning in animals are similar to those in people, and may include vomiting, breathing problems, coma and, in severe cases, death.
- **Avocado.** You might think of them as healthy, but avocados have a substance called persin that can act as a dog poison, causing vomiting and diarrhea or worse.
- **Macadamia nuts.** Dogs may suffer from a series of symptoms, including weakness, overheating, and vomiting, after consumption of macadamia nuts.
- **Grapes and raisins.** Experts aren't sure why, but these fruits can induce kidney failure in dogs. Even a small number may cause problems in some dogs.
- **Xylitol.** This sweetener is found in many products, including sugar-free gum and candy. It causes a rapid drop in blood sugar, resulting in weakness and seizures. Liver failure also has been reported in some dogs.

