

# Kettle Moraine Veterinary Clinic



Feline Senior Care

(920)892-4225

## ***Animals enrich our lives***

People who own pets live longer, happier, and fuller lives. Our pets remind us of what it is to be gentle, loyal, and to flourish and trust. For all that our pets teach us, for all the love and joy they bring to our lives, they deserve good care, and they rely on us to give it.

## ***Why lifetime veterinary care matters***

The average life span of dogs and cats in the United States is 7.4 years. The POTENTIAL life span of the average dog or cat in the United States is 15 years. Comprehensive medical care, good nutrition, and proper training allow pets to live up to their potential as long term family members. In other words, the care you provide your pet with throughout its lifetime will determine how long he or she will remain a happy, healthy member of your family.

Our goal is to maximize the lifespan and the overall health of your dog or cat through preventative medical care, nutritional counseling, and behavioral counseling. We are advocates for your pet. Our job is to advise you of the best care options available for you and your pet.

Working together as a team, we hope to help our patients and their families spend many happy years together.



# **Kettle Moraine Veterinary Clinic**

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## **Senior Cat Wellness Program**

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After-hour emergencies will be handled by  
**Lakeshore Veterinary Specialists**

located at

207 W. Seven Hills Rd.

Port Washington, WI 53074

Phone: (262)268-7800 · Website: [www.lakeshorevetspecialists.com](http://www.lakeshorevetspecialists.com)

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Directions to Lakeshore Veterinary Specialists: *Starting from Plymouth*

1. Head south on HWY 57
2. At the 4-way traffic lights in Fredonia, turn left onto Cr-H/Cr-A
3. Continue to follow Cr-H for 5.5 miles
4. Immediately after crossing the overpass of HWY 43 turn right onto W Seven Hills Road/Cr-LL
5. The Lakeshore Veterinary Specialists is located in the North Port shopping center (207 W. Seven Hills Rd)



# WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

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Please do not hesitate to call with your questions or concerns. We rather you call early, than have your pet suffer needlessly or worsen overnight. If calling after hours, your call will be transferred to Lakeshore Veterinary Specialists Emergency Service. Please **do not give human medications to your pet** without checking with us first. Many human drugs are toxic to pets or are dosed very differently in animals. For instance, Tylenol and Advil are toxic to dogs and cats, and even a small amount of aspirin can be fatal for your cat.

## First Aid Tips

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**Severe Bleeding:** Apply pressure with a cloth, bandage or your hand. **Call your veterinarian.**

**Choking:** You may use a Heimlich maneuver but be gentle. For smaller animals use the infant method. **Call your veterinarian immediately.**

**Vomiting:** Do not give food for 12-24 hours. 2 hours after vomiting stops you can try ice chips or very small amounts of water. If no vomiting, you can gradually increase the amounts of food and water over a 24 hour period. **Call your veterinarian if vomiting continues or if accompanied by diarrhea, fever, lethargy, or pain.**

**Diarrhea:** Do not give food for 12-24 hours. Save a sample of the diarrhea for testing, and keep in a cool place. **Call your veterinarian. If vomiting, lethargy, or pain call immediately.**

**Fracture:** Signs of a bone fracture include inability to stand on limb, limping, intense pain, and bone appearing to bend where it shouldn't. **Call your veterinarian immediately.** While moving your pet, tie a pantyhose or cloth around the muzzle (severe pain can cause even a nice dog to bite). Use a blanket, floor mat, or board as a stretcher to limit the movement of the limb. Keep your pet warm and quiet while transporting.



# Home Checklist for Pet Health

*Please use this checklist on a regular basis. You can discover many problems early, before they become serious and cause undue pain and expense.*

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## **My Pet...**

- is acting normal – active & in good spirits
- has a normal appetite with no chewing or swallowing difficulty
- breathes normally, without straining or coughing
- urinates in the usual amounts and frequency
- has normal appearing bowel movements
- walks without stiffness, pain, or difficulty
- has healthy looking feet and short nails
- has a full, glossy coat that's in good condition
- has skin that is free from dry flakes and isn't greasy
- is free from fleas, ticks, lice, or mites
- has eyes that are bright, clear, and free of matter
- has ears that are clean and free of debris and odor.
- has a moist nose, free of discharge
- has clean, white teeth that are free of plaque and tartar
- has gums that are pink with no redness and non-offensive breath odor
- has a body that is free from lumps/bumps as I run my hand over its entire body

***Call us if you answer “No” to any of the above questions!***



## Care Recommendations for Senior Cats

These suggestions will enable you to provide the best health care, allowing your cat to live as long as possible.

### · Annual physical examination

A year between physical examinations for your cat is like four to seven years between annual examinations for us. Once your older pet begins to show signs of age related illness, we recommend physical exams every 6 months.

### · Nutrition

Feed the highest quality food you can find. Premium pet foods such as Science Diet, Iam's, and Purina senior diets are more digestible and result in a healthier pet with less stool volume. Some cats with diseases such as heart and kidney disease will require specific prescription diets as part of their medical treatment. DO NOT feed table scraps and snacks! Geriatric animals are more likely to suffer digestive upsets from too much variety in their diets.

Many senior pets have dull, dry coats. Supplements also help with arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease and kidney disease.

Constipation is a common and uncomfortable problem in older cats. The fiber content of your cat's food is very important and supplements are available for this as well.

Make sure your older cat doesn't have to compete for food with younger, stronger cats. You may need to feed old or ailing animals separately to ensure they are receiving their fair share.

### · Internal Parasites

Parasites threaten your cat's health. In large numbers they can cause intestinal blockage, bloody diarrhea, and even death. Certain types can also affect you and your family. A microscopic examination of your pet's stool needs to be done annually.

How old is your cat in human years?	
AGE	HUMAN AGE
1 YEAR	7 YEARS
2 YEARS	13 YEARS
3 YEARS	20 YEARS
4 YEARS	26 YEARS
5 YEARS	33 YEARS
6 YEARS	40 YEARS
7 YEARS	44 YEARS
8 YEARS	48 YEARS
9 YEARS	52 YEARS
10 YEARS	56 YEARS
11 YEARS	60 YEARS
12 YEARS	64 YEARS
13 YEARS	68 YEARS
14 YEARS	72 YEARS
15 YEARS	76 YEARS
16 YEARS	80 YEARS
17 YEARS	84 YEARS
18 YEARS	88 YEARS
19 YEARS	92 YEARS
20 YEARS	96 YEARS
21 YEARS	100 YEARS
22 YEARS	104 YEARS
23 YEARS	108 YEARS
24 YEARS	112 YEARS
25 YEARS	116 YEARS
Cats become Seniors at 9 years of age.	

- **Provide a constant supply of fresh & clean water!**

Provide a constant supply of fresh, clean water, as increased thirst and water consumption is a very common symptom of several old-age diseases. Notify us ASAP if you notice any changes!

- **Vaccinations & boosters**

Unfortunately, there is no safe, effective drug available to combat any of the major viral diseases of dogs. Vaccination is the only effective form of protection. Vaccinations enable your cat to fight infection by stimulating the immune system so it makes antibodies against the viruses. Older pets have decreased resistance to disease, so keeping their boosters current is very important. To maintain this protection, cats must be vaccinated regularly so the level of immunity is always high enough to prevent disease. We may adjust our vaccine protocols when your pet becomes elderly.

### **Preventative health care is much more than just vaccinations....**

- **Dental Care** is just as important for your pet as it is for you. The average life span of a cat that receives timely dental care is 10-20% longer than one that doesn't. Infected teeth and gums are very painful to your cat, and also spread infection to the kidneys, heart, liver, and elsewhere. Dental cleanings are a necessary component of a long, happy life for your pet!

- **Prevent Obesity** – extra pounds burden the heart, kidneys, joints, and muscles, decreasing life expectancy 30-50%.

- **Exercise** – most cats don't get nearly enough exercise. Poor health, obesity, and boredom-related behavior problems often result.

- **Grooming & Nail Trims** – **Brush your cat regularly** to prevent mats and tangles. It helps prevent hairballs. Keep an eye out for fleas, dandruff, sores, lumps, bald spots, or mats. Report any skin issues to your veterinarian. Tumors in or beneath the skin are very common in older pets. Many are benign, not cancerous, but early detection and removal of tumors is very important. A dry, dull hair coat is common in older pets. Also watch the nails. Nails that get too long may curl into your cat's pads, or be ripped off when your cat is playing.

· **Flea Control** is essential. Preventing fleas with regular use of effective flea products is much less costly than treating an infestation of fleas in your home. DO NOT waste your money on over the counter flea products. Many do not work and some are even harmful to your pet, especially if your pet has heart problems or is taking medication. Our products provide good control and we will take the time to individualize a flea program to suit your budget & requirements.

· **Litter box** – Scoop your cat's litter pan daily and empty it completely at least once a week. Avoid heavily scented litter, as many cats don't like the way it smells. If your cat is urinating outside of the litter box in inappropriate places, call us right away. This is usually due to bladder problems.

· **Never give human medications (Aspirin, Ibuprofen, Tylenol, acetaminophen) to your cat without checking with us.**

· **Report any changes** or problems in your cat's health or behavior to your veterinarian as soon as possible. Diseases or behavior problems are more successfully treated the earlier they're addressed.

· **As your cat ages** Geriatric workups help detect many of the problems caused by aging (kidney, liver, heart, arthritis, dental, etc.) Proper treatment will improve your pet's quality of life.

· **If your pet's eyesight is impaired** avoid unnecessary moving of furniture or other familiar objects in the home. A dab of perfume or other scents on doorways, table legs, etc. will help even a blind pet to get around with little difficulty.

· **Keep your older pet dry and warm** – tolerance to both heat and cold decreases with age. Warmth also lessens symptoms of arthritis.

***We are here to help you assist your pet in living a long,  
healthy life at the lowest cost to you!***

## Deworming

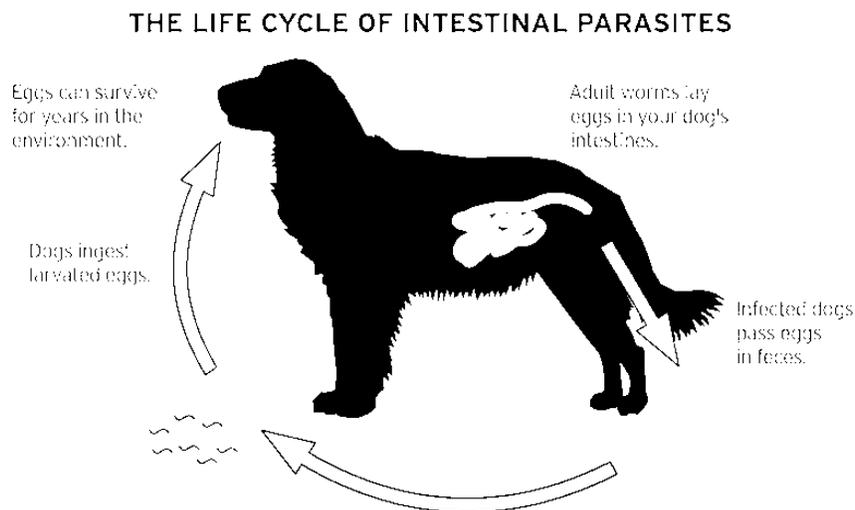
Intestinal parasites can cause vomiting, diarrhea, weight loss, or even death. Some intestinal parasites are transmittable to humans. *Over 10,000 cases of animal roundworms cause illness in children every year in the United States.*

Intestinal parasites are diagnosed by having a fresh stool sample examined under a microscope by someone here at the veterinary hospital. This should be done as part of a health exam when you obtain a cat or dog. Also, it should be done on a yearly basis as part of your pet's annual health exam.

Stool samples should be collected when they are fresh and stored in the refrigerator until they can be brought to the hospital. DO NOT freeze them. One to two teaspoons is all that is necessary to run a fecal exam.

If a stool sample from your pet is found to be positive for worms, the veterinarian will prescribe an effective dewormer. Most parasites require deworming twice, two weeks apart. Please weigh your pet before picking up dewormer to ensure a proper dosage. Stool samples should be checked again in 4 weeks and 8 weeks after the final deworming to ensure your pet is not re-infested by his or her environment. For prevention of intestinal parasites, remove fecal matter from your yard regularly and dispose of it.

So that you may better understand the problems intestinal parasites may cause and what signs to look for, we have included a short description of the six most common types of intestinal parasites.



## **Roundworms**

Roundworms, the most common type of intestinal worm, are 2-4 inches long and resemble strands of spaghetti. They live in the small intestine and may cause vomiting, diarrhea, or weight loss. The larval worms can damage the liver and lungs while migrating through these organs on their way to the small intestine. Roundworms are transmitted via stool of other infected dogs and cats, or through the uterus of the mother dog/cat to her unborn babies. Entire worms can sometimes be seen in the stool or vomit of infested animals.

## **Hookworms**

Hookworms are half inch long worms which attach to the lining of the small intestine, causing blood loss and diarrhea. Puppies and kittens can become infested through the mother's uterus before birth or via her milk after birth. Older animals acquire hookworms through skin contact with the stool of other dogs or cats.

## **Whipworms**

Whipworms live within the large intestine. They are not as common as the other intestinal parasites, but the disease they cause can be very serious. Bloody diarrhea and weight loss are the symptoms seen. These worms are transmitted by ingestion of the stool of infested animals.

## **Tapeworms**

Tapeworms live within the small intestine, where the head attaches to the intestinal wall and produces a chain of segments. Mature segments containing eggs are passed with the stool, or may be seen around the rectum. They resemble small grains of rice. They may be acquired by the ingestion of rodents or birds, or most commonly through the ingestion of fleas. Flea control is essential to control tapeworm infestation.

## **Coccidia**

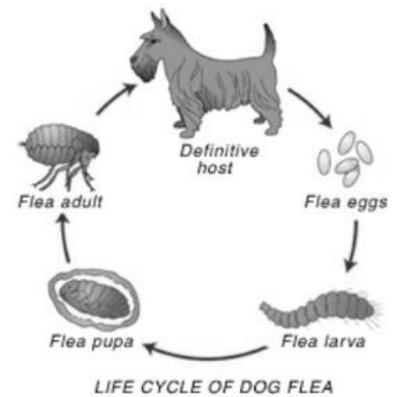
Coccidia are a one-celled protozoan parasite, more like bacteria rather than a worm. Puppies and kittens can pick these up from their mother and they can be acquired by eating rabbit or other wildlife droppings. They are treated with antibiotics.

## **Giardia**

Giardia is also a protozoan. They are very difficult to pick up on a regular stool check. Antibiotics or special dewormers kill them, but they are difficult to eradicate completely and often flare up with stress or other intestinal problems. They are contagious to humans and cause vomiting and diarrhea in both people and pets.

## Preventing Fleas and Ticks

Fleas are among one of the most common health problems in dogs and cats. It is much easier and more cost effective to prevent fleas on your pets than to have to treat a major flea infestation in your house. Regular use of flea products will take care of the occasional flea that your pet may encounter in the yard and should prevent you from having to spend a large sum of money on foggers and exterminators. Treating a bad flea infestation in your house usually costs upwards of \$150.



Fleas will bite your pets causing an itchy allergic reaction which can become very severe. They also carry viral and bacterial diseases. Puppies and kittens can become anemic, which can be fatal. Fleas also carry tapeworms and tapeworm segments can be seen in the stool or around the rectal area of your pet. They look like small rice segments and chances are if they have tapeworms, they have fleas or vice versa.

Other animals bring fleas into your yard. Pets and people can then bring fleas into the house. Birds nesting in the attic or mice seeking shelter can also bring fleas into your home. Fleas can travel and will hop inside through an open door or window. They are often small enough that they can come through a window screen. Once inside your home there is no place a flea cannot get to. Adult fleas spend most of their time on your pet but the remainder of the time they are roaming your house and laying thousands of eggs!

If you've never been lucky enough to see a flea, they are about 1/8 inch long, reddish brown and shaped like a sesame seed with legs. They are usually found on your pet's head, belly or lower back. If you ripple the hair backwards and look at the skin they can be seen scurrying through the base of the hair coat. The droppings they leave behind can be seen in clusters and look like grains of pepper. If you place some of these on a white paper towel, wet it and mush it around it will turn the towel red. This happens because the flea droppings contain digested blood. Plain dirt stays black or gray when it is wet.

### **Prevention**

Many flea products sold in the stores are wasting your time and money, and some are even harmful to your pet. Most compounds that are strong enough to be effective are sold only through licensed veterinarians and exterminators, who are properly trained in their use and are regulated by the state and EPA. Insecticides should only be used according to the label directions. Care is needed to ensure that toxicity does not develop due to the concurrent use of other drugs, pesticides, or because the compound used is not safe for a particular age or type of animal.

Many insecticidal flea collars that are available in stores are not as effective and often cause dermatitis on the pet's neck. Flea shampoos and soaps are great for cleaning your pet but they have no residual effect.

To see what flea/tick treatment Kettle Moraine Veterinary Clinic offers, visit the "Flea Products on the Market" page.

## Flea/Tick Products on the Market for Cats

**Frontline Gold-** a vial of liquid that is applied to the back of the neck in cats. Protects against fleas and ticks for 1 month.

Approved for use on cats, including breeding, pregnant, and lactating queens and kittens 8 weeks or older weighing 1.5lbs or more.

**Revolution-** a vial of liquid that is applied to the back of the neck. Protects against fleas, heartworm disease and also treats and controls hookworms, roundworms, and ear mites. Product is applied once a month and should not be used on kittens less than 8 weeks of age.

**Seresto Collar-** For 8 month prevention and treatment of ticks and fleas on cats and kittens 10 weeks of age or older.

## **Skin and Coat Care for Senior Pets**

The skin is the heaviest single organ of the body, accounting for about 16% of the total body weight. The skin has many functions: it prevents water loss, serves as a sensory organ, protects the body from impact and friction injury, it is elastic for swelling, and it protects against ultraviolet rays from the sun. The skin's glands, blood vessels, and fatty tissues participate in thermoregulation, metabolism, and excretion. The skin is also the body's first defense against disease.

Proper care of your pet's skin and coat is very important to his overall health. Skin and ear problems are among the most common reasons for pet owners to seek veterinary care.

Check your pet's skin often and look for sores, lumps, bald spots, reddened areas, and fleas. Contact us if you find any abnormalities. Brush your pet regularly to prevent mats and tangles.

Many pets are prone to dry, flakey, irritated skin, especially in the winter when the air is dry. Special shampoos, oil rinses, and vitamin-fatty acid supplements are all used to alleviate this problem. Your pet will also have a thicker, shinier coat when he or she is eating a good quality diet.

Brush regularly to prevent mats and tangles. After brushing, wipe away loose hair with a damp towel. This is especially helpful if members of your household are allergic to cats. It also helps prevent hairballs in your cat.

Keep your cats' nails trimmed or have a scratching post available for your cat. Untrimmed nails may grow into paw pads or be torn while playing.

Keep an eye out for fleas, dandruff, sores, lumps, bald spots, or mats. Report any skin issues to your veterinarian. Also watch the nails. Nails that get too long may curl into your cat's pads or be ripped off when your cat is playing.

## Nutrition for Senior Pets

Nutritional needs change with age. This is why so many older people develop osteoporosis, are too thin, or have blood pressure and cholesterol problems. Changes in the sense of taste and smell affect appetite. Changes that alter activity and exercise levels also affect nutritional requirements. All these things can lead to decreased or increased needs for certain nutrients such as fiber, calcium, or sodium.

Older pets, like older people, often suffer from nutritional deficiencies. Changes occur over time in metabolism and in the function of the intestinal tract. Problems such as thyroid abnormalities, heart and kidney disease, and arthritis change the body's needs for certain nutrients. Nutritional excesses, as well as deficiencies, are common in older pets.



Feeding the proper diet is important at any age, but in older animals it can become critical. The effects of a lifetime of living are appearing with age, including the effects of good or poor diets. Avoid feeding table scraps to older pets, as this is not only can upset their nutritional balance, but it is also more likely to lead to stomach upset or diarrhea. Don't feed treats that are high in fat or salt. Also avoid foods that have lots of artificial flavors and colors.

Be sure to have your pet's teeth taken care of so it is comfortable for him or her to eat. Periodontal disease, gingivitis, and cavities can make chewing very painful. Nutritional disturbances, weight loss, and spread of infection to other organs are common results of dental disease.

If your pet is otherwise healthy but just getting up there in age, now is the time to switch to a diet made especially for senior pets. As the digestive tract becomes less efficient with age, it is important to feed a high quality senior diet. Diets for senior pets should have limited or controlled amounts of sodium, phosphorus, protein, and fat, all of which can harm an older pet's health if fed in excess. We never recommend generic, store brand, or cheap foods, but we especially discourage them for older pets, which are more prone to diet related diseases.

If your pet has an age related illness such as kidney disease, chances are good your veterinarian will prescribe a special diet or a supplement to help keep the disease under control. Blood testing in older animals frequently reveals problems that can be addressed with supplements or a change of diet. In cats, we often find low potassium levels on blood testing. Potassium deficiency causes no symptoms until the advanced stages, and eventually leads to muscle weakness and collapsing. Elevated cholesterol levels are common in dogs. Lower fat and higher fiber levels in senior pet food are often helpful. If your pet is too thin, on the other hand, a high fat food may be more appropriate.

What you feed your pet every day is one of the most important components of good health care. Choose wisely and be sure to follow your veterinarian's advice as to what food is best for your pet. It may mean the difference between a long, healthy life and one that's not.

## Cancer in Dogs & Cats

Cancer can occur at any age...



But becomes more likely as the years go by. It is a leading cause of death in geriatric dogs and cats, just as it is in older humans. Cancers can occur in almost any organ of the body. The symptoms vary depending on what organs are involved.



Tumors may be found by you or by your pet's doctor during a physical examination. A biopsy, in which tissue from a tumor is sent to a laboratory for analysis by a pathology specialist, is the only way to make an absolute diagnosis of the type and degree of malignancy of a particular tumor.

There are no specific blood tests for any cancers in our pets.



Removal of the tumor, when possible, is sometimes curative, but chemotherapy and radiation therapy are available at referral institutions such as veterinary schools, should they be necessary. Some types of cancer are much more treatable than others. Skin tumors, for example, can often be removed, whereas a tumor located on the heart or lung is much more difficult.



Lumpectomies, or tumor removals, are one of the most common surgeries we perform. The smaller the lump is, the better the prognosis for recovery and the less chance of allowing cancer to spread. Notify us right away if you notice a lump on your pet!

*Signs to watch for:*

- 1. Change of bowel or bladder habits:** Diarrhea, constipation, straining to urinate or defecate, blood or mucous in the stool or urine.
- 2. A sore that does not heal:** some skin cancers don't appear as lumps, but as raw, bleeding or scabby areas.
- 3. Unusual bleeding or discharge:** Bleeding from the mouth, ears, or nose may signal a tumor inside.
- 4. Drooling or difficulty swallowing:** Very common with tumors in the mouth/throat.
- 5. Changes in respiration:** nagging coughs, hoarseness, tiring easily, rapid breathing, or excessive panting are all signs of heart and lung disease.
- 6. Abdominal distension or filling:** a mass in the abdominal cavity may make your pet appear to be bloated or to have gained weight. This is especially worrisome if your pet looks thin otherwise.
- 7. Unexplained weight loss.**
- 8. Changes in behavior, temperament, activity level, or habits.**

**All these signs can be symptoms of other diseases as well. Call us right away if you notice any changes in your pet!**

## Microchipping Your Pet

### *What is a microchip?*

A microchip is a rice-sized chip placed underneath the skin between the shoulder blades of your pet. The microchip is used as for identification purposes. Vet clinics, police, humane societies, and rescues have scanners that are able to read these microchips. Once a microchip is scanned, a number specific to your pet will pop up. This number will trace to your information such as; your name, address, telephone number, email address, and an alternate contact.

### *How does my pet get micro-chipped?*

Bring your vet into the clinic to be micro-chipped. The injection of the chip is much like giving your pet a vaccine.

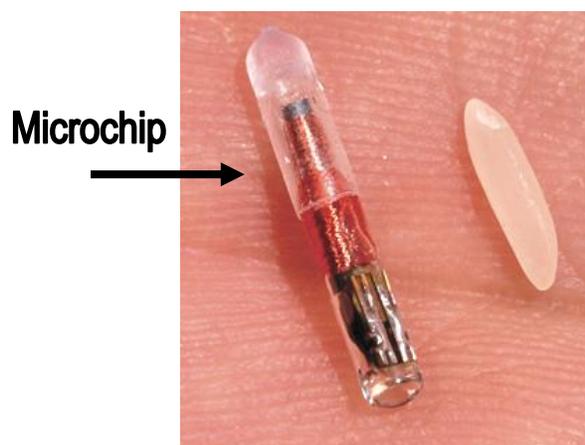


### *Does a microchip act as a GPS for my pet?*

Contrary to popular belief, microchips DO NOT track your pet. Its sole purpose is to carry the number that traces to your information.

**It is VERY important to keep your pet's microchip information up to date as you move or change phone numbers.**

If your pet's microchip information is not kept up to date and your pet is brought to a shelter, there is a chance they won't be able to connect you to the chip. Failure to finding the owners of a lost pet may lead to re-homing. **You are able to update your information by calling the microchip company or accessing their website.**



## **What You Need To Know Before Your Cat's Upcoming Surgery**

Many people have questions about various aspects of their pet's surgery and we hope this will help. It also explains the decisions you will need to make before your pet's surgery.

### **Is the Anesthetic Safe?**

Today's modern anesthetics and anesthetic monitors have made surgery much safer than in the past. We do a thorough physical exam on your pet before administering anesthetics to ensure that a fever or other illnesses won't be a problem. We also adjust the amount and type of anesthetic used depending on the health of your pet.

### **Pre-anesthetic Blood Testing**

Pre-anesthetic blood testing is important in reducing the risk of anesthesia. It is recommended for every pet to do blood testing prior to surgery to ensure that the liver and kidneys can handle the anesthesia. Even apparently healthy animals can have serious organ system problems that cannot be detected without blood testing. If there is a problem it is much better to find it before it causes anesthetic or surgical complications. Animals that have minor dysfunctions will handle the anesthetic better if they get IV fluids during surgery. If serious problems are detected, surgery can be postponed until the problem is corrected.

It is important that surgery be done on an empty stomach, to reduce the risk of vomiting under and after anesthesia. You will need to withhold food for at least 8 hours prior to surgery. Water can be left out until the morning of the surgery.

### **Will My Cat Have Stitches?**

For most surgeries we use absorbable sutures underneath the skin. These will dissolve and do not need to be removed later. You will only need to keep a watch on the incision for any swelling or discharge.



## **Elective Surgeries**

### **Neutering**

The average life span of a neutered pet is 40% longer than an unneutered one. Almost all un-spayed female cats will eventually develop either mammary tumors (breast cancer) or a severe uterine infection called pyometra, by the time they are 8-10 years old. Female cats also go through a heat cycle often.

Male cats commonly develop prostate disease, perianal tumors and testicular tumors in their old age. Even more sadly, the most common reason for euthanasia of pets in the U.S. is behavioral problems. These are usually aggression, running away or urinating in the house by intact male cats. Male cats also have more of a tendency to roam, which leads to car injuries, cat fights and contagious diseases.

Keep in mind also that millions of cats and kittens are put to death in the United States each year because there are not enough homes for them all. Spaying and neutering your pet is the responsible thing to do.

We recommend spaying (surgical removal of the ovaries and uterus) of female cats and castration (surgical removal of the testicles) of male cats who will not be used for purebred breeding. This should be done when your animal reaches 4 months of age. Your pet will be a healthier and happier pet, and you will have done your part to reduce the pet overpopulation.

While your pet is anesthetized for surgery, we can also remove any retained baby teeth, clean ears, trim nails and implant a microchip.

### **Declawing**

Many people who keep their cats indoor prefer their front paws declawed. This surgery is done under anesthesia and requires 1-2 days of hospitalization. We recommend that it be done as soon as your kitten has ended his or her vaccination series, has been dewormed, and weighs at least 2lbs.

Declawing can be done at 4 months of age and can be done at the same time as spaying and neutering. Occasionally we will declaw all four feet, but this is very hard on the cat and seldom necessary.

The older the cat, the more painful the declawing is, so please decide early whether you'd like your cat declawed. Alternatives to declawing are trimming your cat's nails or training them to use a scratching post.

## Anesthesia and Your Pet

Many pet owners worry unnecessarily about anesthesia in their pets. Although anesthesia can never be completely free of risk, today's modern anesthetics make that risk very small.

The same anesthetics that allow complicated surgeries such as heart and kidney transplants to be done on humans are also used in pets as well. Even very frail pets can usually be anesthetized safely. In general, the risks from NOT performing a needed procedure such as dental cleanings or tumor removals are higher than the risk of anesthesia.

We use pre-anesthetic blood screening to help determine whether a procedure will be safe for your pet before it is performed. We recommend pre-anesthetic blood screening for all pets before anesthesia is administered. Even young and apparently healthy animals can have serious organ dysfunctions which are not evident without blood screening.

IV fluids are also recommended to help maintain blood pressure during the procedure. They also replace blood loss, speed recovery and allow for quick administration of life-saving drugs in case of an emergency. IV fluids can be elected for any procedure, but it is especially encouraged for intra-abdominal surgeries (spays) or any procedure where pre-anesthetic blood screening indicates.



During anesthesia your pet will be monitored closely for blood oxygen levels, body temperature, heart rate and heart beat intensity. The anesthesia is always administered by veterinary technicians and doctors to ensure safety and proper dosing.

If you have any further concerns about anesthesia and your pet, we would be happy to discuss the risks and benefits of any procedure with you and explain the exact protocol that will be used. Please let us know!

## Pets and Their Teeth

Professional teeth cleaning is perhaps the most important preventative health care measure that can be done for dogs and cats over four years of age. Pets rarely communicate to their owners the pain and discomfort of oral and periodontal diseases. For middle aged or older pets, oral disease is the most common health problem. Hard mineralized tartar loaded with bacteria is the culprit. Tartar becomes a reservoir for disease-causing bacteria which constantly stresses your pet's immune system. Problems caused by this bacteria-loaded tartar are not limited to periodontal disease and premature tooth loss, but can also spread infection to the heart, lungs, and kidneys. Bad breath (halitosis) is a primary symptom of tartar and oral infection.



The best solution to rid your pet of this health hazard is professional dental cleanings, also commonly referred to as a "dental." This involves a multiple step procedure similar to that done for human teeth cleanings with a few very important differences. The need for general anesthesia is the most obvious.

The safety of your beloved pet under anesthesia is a major concern. There is always a certain risk involved with anesthesia, but the safety of anesthesia has improved remarkably with the advent of superior anesthetic drugs and inhalation gases over the past 10-15 years. We use the safest anesthetics available. Also, pre-anesthetic blood screening is available to further assess your pet's health prior to anesthesia use. Additional protection and safety is afforded by the use of intravenous catheter and IV fluids. This enables us to provide a higher level of quality care for your pet while under anesthesia.

Another area of concern is the spread of infection by the bloodstream to other areas of the body during the teeth cleaning procedure. Antibiotic treatment given prophylactically is the best method to prevent the spread of bacteria and treat concurrent infection problems. Typically, severe cases of periodontal disease are started on antibiotics 2-3 days in advance of the scheduled procedure, whereas milder cases can be started the morning of the procedure or need no antibiotics at all.

The dental procedure itself involves three separate steps: 1. Ultrasonic scaling of each tooth to remove heavy tartar deposits. 2. Hand scaling to remove tartar and plaque under the gum line and hard to reach surfaces. 3. Polishing to remove microscopic deposits and smooth the tooth enamel. This step is critical to remove the mineral crystalline base that can act as a catalyst and foundation for tartar to quickly rebuild. Occasionally, seriously diseased teeth are discovered upon removal of tartar and on close inspection of your pet's teeth. At this time dental x-rays, oral surgery, extractions, follow up exams or cleanings may be recommended to improve your pet's oral health.

Professional dental health care provides your pet with a healthy, disease-free and odor-free mouth. Often, aging pets act livelier and happier than they have in years after proper oral care. Eliminating sources of chronic pain and consistent stress to the immune system are key contributors to a longer and healthier life for your pet.

## **Weight Control & Exercise for Cats**

Over half the cats we see every year at the vet are overweight, many extremely so. Being overweight has some serious consequences for cats, just as it does for people. In fact, the average life span of an obese pet is years shorter than that of pets that stay slim and trim.

Weight related diseases include arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, liver disease, bladder problems, and many types of cancer.

Most of our house pets are not very active. Not only are many of them overweight, but they also don't get enough exercise. This is bad for their health and contributes to behavior problems – a cat that is bored and inactive is more likely to be destructive or aggressive.

### **So, what should you do to prevent these problems?**

Some cats are better at burning calories than others, but for most cats the recommended feeding amounts on cat food bags are way too generous. If you are feeding a good quality food, your cat can eat much less than the label says and still get all the nutrients necessary for good health. Feed only what your pet needs to maintain a healthy weight.

You should be able to easily feel your cat's ribs and backbone under his skin. If there's lots of padding over the ribs, your cat is probably overweight. You should be able to see his waist – his body should curve up behind his ribs if you are looking at him from the side. Looking from above, you should also see a pronounced narrowing of the body behind the ribs. Also look for bulges over the hips or a pot belly, a common place for excess pounds to show up.

On the other hand, if your pet's ribs or backbone are visible or very pronounced when you run your hand across them, your pet may be too thin.

Choose a good quality pet food which fits your pet's lifestyle. If your cat is very active, look for a food made for active cats. If your pet is a couch potato, he needs a low calorie food.

Limit treats, snacks, and table food. It doesn't take many extras to tip the scales. Avoid processed treats- they're loaded with fat and salt and aren't good for your pet's teeth. If you must feed treats, give small pieces or bits of the pet's regular food. Canned food is OK in small amounts, but the more moist food you feed, the faster plaque and tartar build up on the teeth.

Make sure your cat gets the exercise he needs. If he tends to be lazy, get him up and moving with a game of chase the string or roll the wad of paper.

If your cat is already overweight, he'll need an exercise program and/or a restricted calorie diet. Most "light" foods available in supermarkets are only about 10-15% less in calories than regular foods. If you feed one of these diets and give the same amount of food as you fed with regular non-diet food, your pet may stop gaining weight but won't lose any. To achieve a reasonable amount of weight loss in a reasonable amount of time, you need to cut back by about 25-30%. The easiest way to achieve this is to feed a prescription weight loss diet. These foods are lower in fat calories, so you can feed an amount large enough to keep your pet feeling full while still achieving weight loss.

The first step is to measure how much you are feeding per day. Most cat owners simply fill the bowl. Given unlimited access to food, it's no wonder pets get too fat! Start by measuring how many cups of food you put into the bowl a day (usually ½-1 cup). Now you need to feed a smaller amount of food. If your cat is eating a cup of food per day, you might want to only give him ¾ cup. Divide this amount into two or three daily feedings. Cats are natural nibblers and will do better on several small meals a day rather than one large one.

If you switch to a store brand reducing diet, you won't need to cut back as much on the amount you feed, as if you stayed on a regular maintenance food. If you feed a prescription reducing diet, you may not need to cut back at all in amount, as some of these foods are high in bulk and fiber. Either way it's very important to measure the amount you feed. Then adjust the amount fed as the cat loses weight!

Most pets become less active with age, so their calorie needs often go down as they get older. Decrease their food accordingly. Most geriatric pets benefit from a food made for older pets, which is lower in fat and salt.

Please let us know what we can do to help you keep your pet in the peak of its health. We welcome you anytime to put your pet on our scale or ask our opinion on his current weight or weight loss goals.

## WHAT SHAPE IS YOUR CAT?

A little extra weight can be a **BIG PROBLEM**. Whether it's once a week or once a month, check your cat's body score regularly to make sure she's staying happy and healthy.

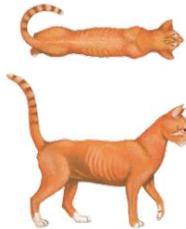
### BODY 1 SCORE

#### VERY THIN

< 5% body fat

Ribs – Easily felt with no fat cover  
Tail Base – Bones are raised, no fat cover  
Side View – Severe abdominal tuck  
Overhead View – Accentuated hourglass shape

20% below ideal body weight



Consult your veterinarian!

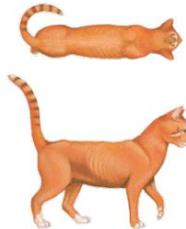
### BODY 2 SCORE

#### UNDERWEIGHT

5-15% body fat

Ribs – Easily felt with little fat cover  
Tail Base – Bones are raised with slight fat cover  
Side View – Abdominal tuck  
Overhead View – Marked hourglass shape

10% below ideal body weight



Consult your veterinarian to see if you are underfeeding your cat.

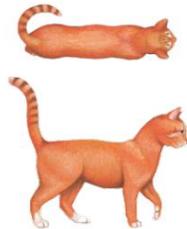
### BODY 3 SCORE

#### IDEAL BODY WEIGHT

16-25% body fat

Ribs – Easily felt with slight fat cover  
Tail Base – Some contour with slight fat cover  
Side View – Abdominal tuck  
Overhead View – Well-proportioned waist

Ideal body weight



Great job!  
Keep doing what you are doing.

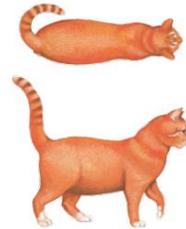
### BODY 4 SCORE

#### OVERWEIGHT

26-35% body fat

Ribs – Difficult to feel under moderate fat cover  
Tail Base – Some thickening, bones palpable under moderate fat cover  
Side View – No abdominal tuck  
Overhead View – Back is slightly broadened at waist

10% above ideal body weight



Consult your veterinarian about the right nutrition for your cat and about ways to increase activity.

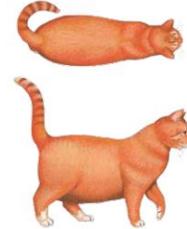
### BODY 5 SCORE

#### OBESE

> 35% body fat

Ribs – Difficult to feel under thick fat cover  
Tail Base – Thickened and difficult to feel under thick fat cover  
Side View – No waist, fat hangs from abdomen  
Overhead View – Back is markedly broadened.

20% above ideal body weight



Extra weight can cause serious health problems for your cat. Consult your veterinarian about the right nutrition for your cat.

## **What is FUS?**

Feline Urological Syndrome, also known as Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease, is one of the most common medical problems in cats. It occurs due to the formation of crystals, made up primarily of magnesium within the bladder. These sand-like crystals irritate the bladder lining, causing pain and allowing bacterial infection to set in.

FUS affects both males and females, but due to their anatomy it is a much more serious problem in male cats. Crystals and mucous clumping together can form a blockage within the penis which blocks urination. A cat that is plugged and cannot urinate will quickly become ill. If not treated in time, the bladder will rupture, and the kidneys will fail. Death usually occurs within 24 hours.

Female cats have a wider urethra, so they don't get blockages as easily. They will, however, develop a painful bladder infection (cystitis). Cats of either sex can also develop stones in the bladder or kidneys.

Signs of FUS in both males and females are bloody urine, straining to urinate, pain on urination, or frequent urination, often outside the litter box. Male cats that are plugged and cannot urinate will often become suddenly and extremely ill. You may see vomiting, depression, squatting in strange positions, reluctance to move or walk, weakness, or loud cries of distress. About 1-5% of cats are affected by FUS.

## **Can FUS be treated?**

Yes, it can be. Females are usually healthy enough to be treated at home. Males that are plugged are anesthetized and a catheter is passed into the bladder, dislodging the plug. The catheter is left in place for 1-3 days to allow the bladder and urethra to heal. Treatment is also given as needed for dehydration, infection, and shock.

Both males and females will need to be treated with special diets, antibiotics, and sometimes urinary acidifiers. Prescription diets are continued for the lifetime of the cat. Without long term dietary management, FUS usually reoccurs.

## **Can FUS be prevented?**

The best way to prevent FUS is to feed your cat a diet low in magnesium. The majority of commercial cat diets have 10-20 times the amount of magnesium needed. Read pet food labels carefully and beware of pet foods labeled "Low Ash." Ash refers to all the minerals, not just magnesium. A food can be low ash, but still be too high in magnesium. Good foods available to help FUS include Science Diet, Iams, and Purina Special Care. Once your cat has had a bout of FUS, prescription diets are much more effective.

Encourage frequent urination by keeping your cat's litter pan clean. Provide plenty of fresh water. Avoid overfeeding to prevent obesity. FUS is more common in obese cats. Above all, remember that FUS in male cats is a true medical emergency. If you think your cat may be suffering from FUS, call your veterinarian immediately.

## **Litter Box Problems Can Be Prevented!**

·Have your cat spayed/neutered at six months of age. Sexually mature, intact cats frequently use urine and fecal marking to indicate their territory. Neutering will correct 90% of elimination problems.

·**The rule of thumb for the number of litter boxes is one per each cat in the household, plus one!** Extra litter boxes are necessary because some cats like to defecate in one box and urinate in another. Others won't use a box that has been previously soiled or used by another cat.

·Clean the litter boxes daily! The single most common reason for house soiling is a dirty litter box. Non-clumping litter should be scooped daily, and the litter box should be washed and emptied every other day. Clumping litter should also be scooped daily and washed/emptied once weekly.

·Choose a litter than appeals to the cat. Most cats prefer sand-like textured scooping litters. Be sure to choose a brand that clumps into a firm ball to make cleaning and scooping easier. As a health precaution for young kittens that may be prone to ingest litter, use a non-clumping litter until the kitten is four months old.

·Never use scented litter. Perfumed, chemical scents repel cats. When you wash the box, use a mild dishwashing liquid. Do not use harsh chemicals with odors.

·Do not use litter box liners-they're irritating to some cats. Also covered, hooded litter boxes may be offensive to some cats. Be sure the litter box is not too small for your cat. Minimum size for litter boxes is 22" x 16".

·Place litter boxes in quiet, private areas that are easily accessible to the cat and where it will not be disturbed by children or ambushed by other pets. Noisy areas near washing machines, furnaces, or under stairs may frighten your cat. Multi-story houses should have a box on each floor. Never place boxes near food/water dishes.

·Limit a kitten's territory until they learn their litter box. Praise and rewards will speed up the learning process. Like small children, they should not be expected to travel very far to find their toilet areas.

·When introducing a new cat to your home, confine the cat to one room with its litter box, bed, and food/water until the cat has used the litter box several times and shows interest in exploring the rest of the house.

·Help your cat feel comfortable in his home and territory. Play games, give massages, talk to him frequently and give him positive attention. A confident and relaxed cat does not need to relieve stress and anxiety urine or fecal marking.

·Some cats have peculiar litter box preferences. Some like smooth or soft surfaces and will often use the bathtub or floor next to the litter box. Declawed cats often have a reputation for doing this more often than others. Try offering the cat an empty litter box or one lined only with newspaper.

## Top 10 Reasons to Keep Your Cat Indoors

10. Their owners will never have to bail them out of the local shelter.
9. It's much more difficult for people to steal them.
8. Crotchety neighbors will like them better.
7. Birds will like them better.
6. When it's 10:00 at night, their owners will always know where they are.
5. There is less of a chance of getting a leg caught in a steel-jawed trap.
4. It's unlikely their owner will transmit to them the Feline Leukemia Virus, Feline Immunodeficiency Virus, or other contagious diseases. Cats contract these viruses through contact with other cats.
3. They are not as liable to have fleas, fungus, or worms as free-roaming animals.
2. They are less likely to be hit by a car when crossing the living room vs. crossing the street.
1. **The lifespan of an indoor cat is 12-15 years and that of the average outdoor cat is 2-3 years!**



## **Cats and Hairballs**

Cats spend a significant part of their lives cleaning and grooming – as much as 1/3 of their waking hours! While this natural instinct makes them ideal house pets, it can lead to some uncomfortable side effects.

The problem begins during the cleaning process, when cats will often swallow their own hair. That cat's tongue is the culprit. It has tiny, barb-like projections on its surface which pull loose hair from the coat. Because of the inward angle of these barbs, the hair remains lodged on the tongue's surface until the cat swallows it. Since the hair is largely insoluble protein, it cannot be dissolved by the cat's digestive system. As this undigested hair begins to knot in the stomach and accumulate in the gastrointestinal tract, it can interfere with normal digestion and elimination.



Symptoms of “hairballs” include constipation, listlessness, dry cough, and even vomiting. It is also the most frequent cause of depression and loss of appetite.

The most dramatic and obvious symptom is the regurgitated hairball which is often tubular in shape. Besides being an inconvenience to clean up, it is a definite sign that your cat has a problem and needs help.

Although rarely fatal, hairballs are very uncomfortable for your cat and can lead to serious complications.

### **What can be done?**

Daily brushing of the cat's coat to remove loose hair is a good preventative. Long-haired breeds need special attention. During the spring when all cats shed, daily brushing is especially important. After brushing, wipe your cat down with a damp towel to remove the loose hair.

Besides brushing the coat, there are several medications which are available to eliminate hairballs and help prevent their reoccurrence. A dietary fiber supplement when added to the cat's food can aid in the elimination of accumulated hair and other materials without discomfort. Laxatives have been recommended by veterinarians for decades. There are many different brands of laxative remedies available and it should be easy to find one that appeals to your cat's taste.

Remember your cat relies on you for help in relieving this problem. A program of frequent brushing, regular use of a hairball remedy, and following the advice of your veterinarian is all it takes.