



## **PRIORY VETERINARY SURGEONS KITTEN ADVICE**

**Congratulations on the arrival of your new family member! Here at Priory Veterinary Surgery we are committed to providing your cat with everything they need to live a long and healthy life.**

1. **Vaccinations** - in order to gain maximum immunity, but with the fewest visits to the surgery we advise to vaccinate kittens at 9 and 12 weeks of age, and to give the first annual booster within 12 months of the second vaccination. Thereafter, your cat will need a yearly check up and vaccination with one of our veterinary surgeons. We recommend that cats that go outdoors need the FeLV (feline leukaemia virus) vaccine, as it is spread through direct contact (fighting, grooming, mating). All cats, even those that live indoors, need the cat "flu and enteritis" vaccines (as these viruses can be carried into your home on shoes and clothing). There are so many strains of cat flu that it is impossible to vaccinate against all of them, but generally the clinical signs in vaccinated cats tend to be far less severe. Most reputable catteries will insist that your cat is vaccinated against at least cat 'flu' and enteritis before boarding to minimise the risk of disease.
2. **Worming** - Just because your kitten hasn't been outside doesn't mean it can't have come into contact with parasites that can cause problems. Kittens can actually pick up worms from their mother's milk, so ideally your kitten will already have had some worming treatment before coming to you. The two main worms that affect kittens are roundworms and tapeworms. Roundworms can be fatal to tiny kittens and stunt growth but they can also infect people, especially children, and if they grow unchecked, they can even cause blindness. We recommend Advocate spot-on pipettes monthly. Tapeworms live in your kittens gastrointestinal tract which can be very dangerous in an animal as small as a kitten. We recommend that kittens are wormed every month until they are six months old, then every three to six months after that depending on their lifestyle.

3. **Flea treatment** - Fleas can be transmitted from the mother cat, other pets, or from the environment. There are a number of different options for flea treatment and prevention which we can discuss with you to get the right product for your kitten. Advocate spot-on pipettes contain very effective flea control as well as worming your cat, so they are a convenient choice.
  
4. **Microchipping** - we recommend that all cats are microchipped. This involves implanting a small silicone chip under the skin at the back of the neck. This chip contains a number that can be read by a special scanner. When it is implanted we will take all your contact details, which get sent to a central online database. If your cat goes missing and is handed in to a vet or rescue centre, they will be able to scan the chip, check the database, and then contact you and reunite you with your cat. It is your responsibility that if you move house or your details change, that you must contact the microchip company to get these updated.
  
5. **Nutrition** - If a kitten is going to grow into a healthy adult cat, it needs to be given the right balance of nutrients for this crucial stage of life. We recommend the Royal Canin kitten food which is designed for the different stages in your cat's life. If your kitten has come from a breeder, start by giving them the same food that they are used to. If you want to switch to another food, do it gradually over a week or so, mixing the old with the new but adjusting the quantities over time. If you want to discuss your kitten's diet then please book an appointment with one of our friendly nurses
  
6. **Neutering** - If you do not intend to breed from your kitten once they have reached sexual maturity, then we recommend that you neuter them at 5-6 months of age. Castrating the male (removal of the testes), and spaying the female (removal of the ovaries and uterus) not only prevents unwanted pregnancies occurring, but also curbs unwanted behavioural patterns associated with sexual maturity and reduces the risk of certain diseases. Please see our separate neutering advice sheet for more details
  
7. **Socialisation** – it is crucial that kittens have the right kind of experiences during the first 8-10 weeks of their life as this is their socialisation period. Getting them used to different people, situations and things such as car travel during this period can make for a much less anxious adult cat.