








New Kitten
Owner
Information Kit

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Congratulations on the new addition to your family and home! There is a lot of excitement when you first bring home your new kitten, but there is also a lot to learn about general care for your new cat. The doctors at Wolf Merrick Animal Hospital know that there is an enormous amount of information regarding care of a cat, and at times, all this information can be overwhelming. We have compiled some general information in the following pages to help you become a more understanding and informed pet owner.

Contact Information

Wolf Merrick Animal Hospital
4415 52nd Street
Kenosha, WI 53144
Phone (262) 652-4266
Fax (262) 652-9266
General email: wolfmerrick@wolf-merrick.com

Hours

By appointment
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday.....8am-7pm
Wednesday, Friday.....8am-5pm
Saturday.....8am-1pm

Doctors



Dr. Richard Hendrickson
Dr. Lorene Rockwell



Emergencies

For after-hours emergencies call...

Animal Emergency & Treatment Center
1808 E. Belvidere Road
Grayslake, IL
(847) 548-5300



Animal Emergency Center
2100 W. Silver Spring Drive
Glendale, WI
(414) 540-6710

Animal ER of Kenosha and Racine
4333 S. Green Bay Road
Racine, WI
(262) 553-9223



Payment Policy

Wolf Merrick Animal Hospital accepts cash, check, Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover. Payment is required at the time services are rendered. You may qualify for a payment plan through Care Credit, a veterinary expense credit card you can apply for through our office. (see page 14 for more details)

VACCINATIONS

As a responsible cat owner, maintaining your cat's health is a primary concern. In addition to providing a loving environment and a quality diet, prevention of infectious disease is one of the most important steps you can take to keep you pet illness free. Kittens, debilitated, and geriatric cats are particularly at risk for contracting infectious diseases.

Fortunately, the vaccines available for cats are highly effective for preventing most of these infectious diseases. Due to the nature of your feline's immune system, the age at which your pet receives its vaccines and the timing of the shots are very important. In general, kittens require a series of two or three vaccines depending on their age. When the initial "kitten shots" are complete, boosters are required to maintain you cat's immunity against these deadly diseases.

All cats, indoor and outdoor, should be vaccinated against the following:

FVRCP



Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis

A herpes viral disease that infects the eyes and upper respiratory tract. Once contracted, infected cats continually have recurrence of disease symptoms lifelong.

Calicivirus

A viral disease causing vomiting and diarrhea, oral ulcers, and high fever.

Panleukopenia

A viral disease that causes severe vomiting, diarrhea, and dehydration, then infects the bone marrow. It is commonly causes death in unvaccinated cats.



Rabies

A deadly virus that results in a fatal disease of the nervous system and can infect humans.

Any cat that goes outside or may have contact with other cats or contact with urine or feces of other cats should be vaccinated against:

Feline Leukemia

A virus that is transmitted from an infected cat via a bite or scratch, or from contact with infected saliva or urine. This virus causes suppression of the immune system and can be the cause of cancer in cats. It is often fatal.



Feline Immunodeficiency Virus

A virus that is transmitted from an infected cat from a bite, or scratch, or from contact with infected saliva or urine. This virus causes suppression of the immune system that can lead to disease and death.



The typical vaccination schedule for a kitten is as follows:

Next Due:

_____	At about 8 weeks old	FVRCP (1 st of 3)
_____	At about 12 weeks old	FVRCP (2 nd of 3), +/- Fe Leuk (1 st of 2), +/- FIV (1 st of 2)
_____	At about 16 weeks old	FVRCP (3 rd of 3), Rabies , +/- Fe Leuk (2 nd of 2), +/- FIV (2 nd of 2)

After this initial booster series, vaccines are updated regularly thereafter. After the first year, FVRCP and Rabies vaccines are recommended to be given every 3 years. All others are recommended to be given annually.

FECAL EXAM / DEWORMING

Dogs and cats are host to many different parasites. Studies have shown that up to 75% of 4 week old kittens are parasitized. Many breeders and pet stores will deworm kittens without actually testing for parasites. This is an excellent practice, but unfortunately, no one deworming medicine kills all types of parasites. Contrary to popular belief, most worms cannot be seen in your pet's stool therefore, the best way to detect parasites is by a "fecal flotation" (intestinal parasite exam) technique, which involves the use of a microscope.

Some worms release eggs intermittently and since fecal floatations detect worm eggs, it is best to check a series of at least two stool samples. This is typically done when your kitten receives its vaccinations. For healthy adult cats, a yearly test is usually all that is necessary.

If your kitten has not yet been properly "dewormed", Wolf Merrick Animal Hospital will prescribe deworming medication whether or not the stool tested positive for worms. Because of human health concerns, the CDC (Center for Disease Control) recommends that all puppies and kittens be routinely dewormed regardless of results of the stool test.

FELINE LEUKEMIA & FELINE AIDS TESTING

All new cats and kittens should be routinely tested to find out if they harbor either Feline Leukemia or Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (Feline AIDS), especially before introducing them to any other household cats. We have a combination

test available that will check for Feline Leukemia and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus.

FELINE LEUKEMIA VIRUS (FeLV)

This virus is a leading cause of infectious disease and death in cats. FeLV can break down the cat's protective immune responses so that the cat is unable to fight off infections it would normally be able to resist. Additionally, the virus commonly causes fatal anemia or a form of cancer in infected cats.

FeLV can be transmitted from a mother to her unborn fetus prior to birth, by direct contact with an infected cat, or by contact with contaminated cat saliva or urine. This is not an air-borne virus, nor is it likely to be brought into the household by your dog or any other non-feline. For this reason we only recommend vaccinating cats that are at risk, such as outdoor cats.

Most infected cats carry the virus for some time without any outward signs. For this reason, Wolf Merrick Animal Hospital recommends testing every new kitten. Any older cat whose FeLV status is unknown should be screened as well. For kittens, this test is most accurate when performed at 12 weeks of age or older.

FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (FIV)

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) causes Feline AIDS, a viral disease spread by direct cat-to-cat contact from bites, scratches, or contact with infected saliva. A cat may be infected with this virus for several years without any signs of disease. Eventually however, the virus causes an immunodeficiency very similar to human AIDS. The feline virus is not contagious to humans, only other cats!

We recommend testing every new kitten. Additionally, any older cat whose FIV status is unknown should be tested as well. For kittens, this test is most accurate when performed at 12 weeks of age or older.



NUTRITION

Diet is extremely important in the growing months of a kitten's life. We recommend feeding a premium brand kitten food such as Iams, Eukanuba, or Science Diet. You will want to feed kitten food until about 6 months of age, and then switch to an adult food. This switch must be done gradually over a period of several days, in order to prevent any intestinal upset. Quality brands of dry and canned cat food provide complete nutrition; however, dry food can slow dental tartar build-up and therefore better for your cat's teeth. If you would like to feed your kitten a canned food, do so occasionally, as a treat. They do not require canned food to provide them with any extra nutrients and therefore do not need

to be given canned food as a full meal. Fresh, clean water should be available at all times.

It is very important NOT to feed your cat dog food. Pet foods are designed specifically for each species, in order to provide the correct nutrients to maintain a happy and healthy life for each animal.

If you opt to feed your cat a non-premium variety of food such as some diets found at grocery stores, make sure to choose a diet that states that it was formulated "For Urinary Tract Health". Cats are inherently predisposed to developing certain types of crystals in their bladder. These crystals can irritate the urinary bladder and can cause a cat to act as if it has a urinary tract infection. This is a more serious problem in male cats because they have a very narrow urethra diameter and these crystals can actually cause an obstruction of the urethra and prevent your male cat from emptying his bladder! This obviously is a painful and life threatening situation. Premium foods, and foods labeled to promote urinary tract health have been specially formulated to create a more acidic urine and have reduced magnesium levels. As such, these foods significantly reduce the risk of urinary bladder crystal formation and ultimately reduce the likelihood of urethral blockage. The following is a variety of diets formulated for urinary tract health:

*Iams - all varieties

*Science Diet – all varieties

Nature's Recipe – Urinary Health Formula

Purina – Special Care UT

Pro Plan – Special Formula

*Eukanuba - all varieties

Nutro – Max Cat or Max Cat Lite

9 Lives – Plus Care

Friskies – Special Diet

*Recommended by Wolf Merrick Animal Hospital



SPAYING AND NEUTERING

Spaying is the removal of the female cat's reproductive organs (uterus and ovaries). Neutering is the removal of a male cat's testicles. Both procedures are performed under general anesthesia.

WHY IS THIS NECESSARY?

Spaying your female cat eliminates unwanted heat cycles. If a female cat is not bred, she will go into heat every 2 to 3 weeks. When in heat, female cats can exhibit obvious personality changes that can be very bothersome to the pet owner. Additionally these females tend to have an increased desire to escape and roam, and they tend to attract tomcats. In addition to preventing a litter of unwanted kittens, spaying prevents a potentially life threatening disease of the

uterus that often develops later in the cat's life. Spaying also reduces the chance of development of malignant mammary tumors.

Neutering your male cat reduces the roaming instinct and fighting. Neutering significantly reduces the pungent odor of the urine typical of male cats. Finally, many unneutered male cats start marking their territory by spraying urine on objects in the house. This behavior is unlikely with neutered male cats. The longer your cat sprays or fights, the less likely neutering is to stop it. Therefore, it is important to neuter your cat while it is a juvenile, before these behaviors begin.

Spaying or neutering your cat is good for society. Each day, an average of 70,000 puppies and kittens are born in the U.S. Each year about 8 million of these animals are euthanized simply because there are not enough homes for them. Don't let your cat contribute to this crisis. Spay or neuter your cat!

WHEN SHOULD THE SURGERY BE PERFORMED?

The best time to have your cat spayed or neutered is between 5 and 6 months of age. This is before the first heat cycle in females and before unwanted behaviors have started in male cats.



DECLAWING

Scratching with the front claws is normal, instinctive behavior for cats. They scratch in order to remove old, worn fragments of nails. Although scratching is normal, this behavior can be destructive and costly in a home. Some cats can inflict minor scratches to people when they play.

For those who choose to declaw, the procedure is typically performed at 6 months of age when a cat is spayed or neutered. It is performed under anesthesia and consists of surgical removal of the nail bed of the front feet. All cats are hospitalized for 2 nights with this procedure.

LASER DECLAW SURGERY

Wolf Merrick Animal Hospital is one of the only veterinary facilities in the area that offers laser use for declaw surgery. The benefits of laser include: less post-operative pain, little or no blood loss, and less swelling. In many cases, by using a laser, a tourniquet is not required, thereby reducing the potential for transient neuritis of the leg that occasionally occurs with traditional surgical methods. All declaw surgeries at Wolf Merrick Animal Hospital are performed with the use of a laser.

DO I HAVE TO DECLAW MY CAT?

No. An alternative to declawing a cat is to discourage it from scratching furniture and encourage it to use a scratching post in the home. In this case, you should provide your cat with a sturdy scratching post in an easily accessible location. Encourage the use of the post by rubbing catnip on the post and rewarding your cat with a treat *immediately* after it uses it. Discourage unacceptable scratching by covering desired scratching surface textures with something smooth like duct tape or packing tape, or covering with plastic until your cat is trained. Many cats can be trained to use a scratching post as opposed to using furniture this way.

You should not declaw your cat if you plan to let it outdoors unsupervised!

LITTERBOX TIPS

The rule of thumb for the number of litter boxes is one box per cat per household, plus one. Extra litterboxes are necessary because some cats like to defecate in one and urinate in another. In a multi-cat household, some cats will not use a box that has already been soiled or used by another cat. Put the litterbox(es) in a low traffic/noise area separate from the food and water dishes. When you have a new kitten/cat, show your feline where it is located a few times. Until the habit of using the litterbox is firmly established, confine the kitten to a small room with its litterbox whenever it cannot be closely supervised. Keep the boxes clean by scooping out the waste daily and changing the litter every few days. Use a mild detergent to clean the box.

Avoid scented litter. Perfumed, chemical scents can repel cats. Use “dust free” litter since dust can irritate the eyes and lungs in some cats. Any urinating or defecating outside of the box could be a sign of a health or behavior problem. Long-term problems can be very difficult to correct, so please call our hospital for advice.

CAT INTRODUCTIONS

Many cats will accept kittens readily. If you have one or more especially sensitive or aggressive cats or if you are introducing two older cats, we recommend the following technique: the new cat should have a room of his/her own for a few days. Exchange the new cat's bedding with that of the resident cat so that they can become acquainted with each other through the sense of smell before they have the opportunity to see each other. Next, rotate rooms. Let the new cat explore the rest of the house while the resident cat spends some time in the new cat's room. When they are relaxed about this step, crack the door of the new cat's room so that they can see each other, but can't push the door open. When the cats are calm in each other's presence, it is time to let the new cat out for a few minutes. The length of the visits can be increased gradually each day. This process may take a few days or a few months depending on the personalities of the cats. If at any time the cats become fearful or hostile, return the newcomer to its room and close the door. A fiercely aggressive encounter will be remembered for a long time and should be avoided at all costs. Take your time. A gradual process of discovery and investigation is best. Eventually, most, but not all, cats will work things out and either become close friends or will respect each other's space.

SOCIALIZATION

Kittens, like puppies, have a specific "socialization period" in their lives. This period occurs roughly between 6 and 14 weeks of age. After this time in their lives, cats are more resistant to social influences. In other words, your kitten should experience as many positive experiences with other cats, dogs, men, women, children, etc., in order for it to accept them throughout its adult life. If experiences are absent or unpleasant, it is likely for your cat to develop apprehensive or adverse behaviors toward people and other animals.

For example, if you feel you may eventually add a dog to your household sometime in the future, it would be wise to acclimate your cat to dogs during this critical socialization period. Otherwise it is likely that your cat may never accept life with a dog.

INDOOR vs OUTDOOR CAT

INDOOR

We recommend that your cat remain indoors. It is unlikely for your indoor cat to contract deadly diseases such as heartworm disease, feline leukemia disease, and feline AIDS. Indoors cats are less likely to acquire fleas and mites, as well as various intestinal parasites. Additionally, when your cat remains indoors, injuries, wounds, and infections from other animals are not likely to occur. You can also rest assured that your indoor cat will not end up as another victim of trauma from being hit by a car, or get lost when it is confined indoors.

OUTDOOR

If you choose to let your cat outdoors, it is very important to protect it from fleas, ear mites, heartworm disease, parasites, and feline leukemia disease.

In addition to the routine vaccinations given to indoor cats, outdoor roaming cats need to be vaccinated against feline leukemia. If you closely supervise your cat outdoors, and you are certain it will not contact another infected cat or infected waste from another cat, your cat may not be at significant risk for contracting feline leukemia and thus may not require vaccination.

During warmer months (March through October), you can protect your cat from fleas, ear mites, round and hookworms, and heartworms simply by applying REVOLUTION to your cat every month. REVOLUTION is applied as a few drops of liquid on the back of the neck (*brochure available*).

It is especially wise to have a microchip implanted in your cat if it is allowed outdoors. This greatly increases the chance of recovering your cat should it become lost or impounded. An outdoor roaming cat should never be declawed! These cats need their claws to escape danger by climbing, or to defend themselves.



FLEAS

Fleas are blood-sucking parasites that prefer the blood of dogs and cats to that of people. However, if an animal is not present at feeding time, the flea will bite a human. The flea season begins around April and continues throughout the summer until freezing weather in autumn. Your cat can become infested from simply going outdoors from time to time.

Flea prevention is very important to your cat's health and well-being. Fleas can cause considerable irritation to your cat. Not only can they transmit tapeworms



to your cat, they can also transmit *Bartonella* “the cat scratch disease” bacteria to cats. These bacteria can be spread to people via cat bites and scratches. Once infested by fleas, your cat will infest your home and other pets in the household with these parasites when he/she comes indoors.

Any cat that goes outdoors, even on occasion, should be placed on flea preventative. For cats, we prescribe the following flea preventatives:

- 1) REVOLUTION – a topical liquid applied once a month to one spot on your cat’s skin. This product also prevents against heartworm disease, ear mites, roundworms and hookworms. *Brochure available.*
- 2) FRONTLINE – a topical liquid applied to one spot on your cat’s skin. This top spot can also help prevent against ticks. One application lasts one month for flea control and is water resistant. *Brochure available.*

The easiest and most accurate way to check for fleas is to look for “flea dirt” which is actually the stool of the fleas digested blood meal. It is often difficult to actually find fleas on your pet. Sometimes only “flea dirt”, tiny, black granules that resemble black pepper, is the only evidence that your pet is infested. Place your cat on a clean surface like a table or countertop and briskly scratch him/her around the neck, base of tail, abdomen, and hindquarters. Any pepper-sized pieces of debris that came off your cat may be flea dirt. To find and distinguish this material from dirt, wipe the surface with a moist, white paper towel. With your finger, smudge any spots found on the towel. If you see a reddish-brown color, your pet has fleas!

A complete flea control program requires all the pets in the household and the house to be treated at the same time and at regular intervals. There is NO EASY WAY to solve flea infestations. Luckily, in this climate, fleas are a seasonal threat during warm weather. Wolf Merrick Animal Hospital recommends using flea preventative for any cat that goes outdoors from May 1st to November 15th (or the second hard frost of autumn).

HEARTWORM DISEASE

Heartworm disease primarily affects dogs, however cats can become infected as well. With this disease, worms develop in the heart chambers and major blood vessels associated with the heart. These worms are about the size of angel hair pasta and are transmitted by the bite of a mosquito. This is a potentially life threatening disease that interferes with the normal blood flow from the heart and can result in congestive failure of the heart and other organs. In cats, sometimes the only symptom is sudden death, although coughing, respiratory difficulty, and

vomiting can also be signs of a heartworm infestation. Unfortunately, to date, there is no approved treatment for heartworm disease in cats.

Kenosha county and Southeast Wisconsin have an extremely high heartworm infection rate, and since heartworm disease is an untreatable disease in cats, any cat exposed to mosquitoes should be placed on heartworm prevention medication during the mosquito season. Recent studies show that at least 30% of cats diagnosed with heartworm infection do not ever go outside. This means that mosquitoes are getting in our houses and infecting our cats at a much higher rate than we once thought. Because of this, Wolf Merrick Animal Hospital recommends that all cats living in the Kenosha area should be placed on heartworm preventative.

There are two different types of heartworm prevention medications we can prescribe for your cat which are extremely safe and effective:

- 1) REVOLUTION is applied as a few drops of liquid applied to the skin once a month at home that additionally prevents against fleas, ear mites, roundworms, and hookworms. *Brochure available.*
- 2) HEARTGARD is a chewable treat given once a month at home. *Brochure available.*

We would be more than happy to discuss which preventative is best for your cat.

MICROCHIPPING YOUR CAT

A microchip is a tiny device about the size of a grain of rice that can be inserted under the skin of a pet with a simple injection. Once implanted, this chip can be scanned with a device that encodes a serial number. This serial number provides for accurate identification of the dog or cat, as well as the name, address, and phone number of its owner. The majority of humane societies, shelters, and veterinary facilities can scan incoming pets for the presence of a microchip. In the case of lost, or impounded pets, it significantly improves the chances of finding the pet's rightful owner.

The use of microchips to provide individual identification for cats and dogs is the preferred method of positive identification. Unlike a tag or collar, it cannot fall off or be removed. We can implant a microchip in your puppy or kitten at the time of spay or neuter, during regular vaccinations, or on any outpatient appointment. *Brochure available.*

PET HEALTH INSURANCE

Most people start wondering about health insurance for their pet when it's too late, after they find that they could really use it. Today, in veterinary medicine, we have technologies that allow us to diagnose and treat diseases in our pets like never before. From total hip replacements to advanced arthritis care to cancer treatment, we can do amazing things for our family companions. Unfortunately, many pet owners are unable to pursue many of these advanced diagnostic and treatment options due to cost and many pets that could otherwise be diagnosed and treated, are not.

Fortunately there are a number of different insurance options available for your pet, including plans that will cover vaccinations and routine care! Below are several insurance companies that offer pet insurance plans, not necessarily endorsed by Wolf Merrick Animal Hospital. Please contact them directly for information.

Embrace Pet Insurance	800-511-9172	www.embracepetinsurance.com
The Hartville Group Inc.	800-807-6724	www.petshealthplan.com
Pet First Healthcare	866-937-PETS	www.petfirst.com
Pethealth Inc.	877-738-4584	www.petcareinsurance.com
Pet Partners Inc.	866-725-2747	www.akcphp.com
Petplan Insurance	800-268-1169	www.petplan.com
Pets Best Insurance	877-738-7237	www.petsbest.com
Veterinary Pet Insurance/VPI	800-USA-PETS	www.petinsurance.com
Vetinsurance Ltd.	800-930-1019	www.vetinsurance.com



PAYMENT POLICY with Care Credit

Full payment is required at the time services are rendered.

Wolf Merrick Animal Hospital accepts cash, check, debit card, Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover. We also accept CareCredit.

A deposit of at least 50% must be paid for all hospitalized patients or procedures. Only exceptions are: spay, neuter, routine dental cleaning.

Personal Checks:

We cannot hold checks for later deposit. All checks received will be deposited daily. We must see a picture ID of the person writing the check each time.

There will be a \$35.00 service fee charged to your account for all returned checks. And a \$20.00 service fee charged for any redeposited check.

CareCredit:

CareCredit is a credit card for veterinary expenses that you can apply for at Wolf Merrick Animal Hospital. This credit card can be used for minor purchases such as pet food or annual vaccinations, but is additionally helpful to have for any major unforeseen veterinary expenses that sometimes occur.

The benefit of having CareCredit is that there are interest-free payment plans available* and payments as low as \$10 per month. 3 to 6 month interest free plans are available when at least \$300 is charged to the account during one transaction. In most cases the approval process takes only 15 minutes. If approved, the account can be used the same day.

Please ask us for an application or apply online at www.carecredit.com.
Brochure available.

*Minimum monthly payments of 3% or \$10. If balance is not paid in full within the specified interest-free period, APR applies and is subject to increase or decrease. Further details available upon request.

