

YOUR CAT'S ANNUAL EXAM

Vaccines

Vaccines are started when your kitten is 6-8 weeks old and continue every 3-4 weeks until he is 12-15 weeks of age. The booster vaccine that is given is FVRCP (rhinotracheitis, calicivirus and panleukopenia) and is responsible for preventing upper respiratory infections as well as feline distemper (a life threatening virus). This vaccine is given yearly to adult cats.

The feline leukemia vaccine is recommended for all kittens under one year of age and for adult cats that will be going outside or exposed to many other cats. It is passed by close contact (grooming, sharing food bowls) and may be life threatening. Kittens are more susceptible to the infection since their immune system is not mature. We recommend testing all kittens and new adult cats for the virus (we do a combination test for feline leukemia and feline immunodeficiency virus). The vaccine is given as a series of 2 injections 3 weeks apart and is then given on a yearly basis.

Rabies is recommended for cats because of the human health risk. Indoor cats could be exposed if they got outside and were in contact with other cats or if a rabid animal (bat or other animal) got into the house. The vaccine is usually given with the final kitten vaccines and is given on a yearly basis.

Fecal Exam

Your cat should have a stool sample checked at least once or twice a year to look for intestinal parasites. We look microscopically for eggs that are not visible to the naked eye. Kittens should have at least 2-4 stool samples checked as well as multiple dewormings since it is so common for them to have intestinal parasites (worms).

Physical Exam

Your cat should have a physical exam at least once a year. We will examine his teeth, eyes, ears, listen to his heart and lungs and palpate his abdomen. We are looking for any abnormalities (dental disease, ear infections, heart murmurs, etc) and any input you can give us as to your pet's health at home will be helpful. It is very important for kittens to be examined as they receive their boosters. They are growing and changing rapidly and a physical exam can help detect problems that otherwise may not be apparent.

Annual Blood Profile

We recommend drawing blood from your cat on a yearly basis so that we can check for early signs of disease, including kidney failure, liver failure, diabetes and anemia. This is particularly good to do in animals that will be anesthetized for general surgery (spay, neuter or dentistry) and in older animals. The purpose is to catch a disease process in the early stages before it becomes a big problem.

Heartworm Disease

Heartworm disease is not a common problem in cats. Even though only a small percentage of cats will get heartworm disease, we consider it to be very important. Cats with heartworm can be very difficult to diagnose, almost impossible to treat and can die suddenly from the disease. We generally start cats on heartworm prevention without testing them first because it is so difficult to make a diagnosis and they don't have the reactions to heartworm prevention that dogs do if they are heartworm positive.

There are two main types of heartworm prevention for cats. Heartgard is a once a month chewable treat that also prevents roundworms and hookworms in cats. Revolution is a topical medication that is applied to the back of the neck and will prevent heartworms, fleas, ear mites, roundworms and hookworms.