

TARINGA VET'S



11 Step preventative health plan for cats

1) Vaccination

Vaccinations are vital to help prevent infectious diseases such as cat 'flu', feline parvovirus and feline AIDS.

We recommend F3 vaccines for exclusively indoor cats, and F3 + FIV vaccines for cats with outdoor access.

PRIMARY COURSE			ADULT BOOSTERS
8 weeks	10 weeks	12 weeks	Annually from 15 months of age onwards
F3 FIV (outdoor cats)	FIV (outdoor cats)	F3 FIV (outdoor cats)	F3 FIV (outdoor cats)

- **F3** protection from Feline herpesvirus and calicivirus ("cat 'flu'") and feline panleukopaenia ("feline parvo")
- **FIV** protection from Feline Immunodeficiency Virus ("cat AIDS")



2) Heartworm prevention

Heartworm is very different to intestinal worms. It is a potentially devastating worm that can cause severe illness two ways:

- 1) Adult worms live inside the heart blocking it up and causing heart failure.
- 2) Larval stages cause lung disease causing cats to have difficulty breathing.

It is difficult to avoid exposure to this deadly disease (even indoor cats are at risk!) since it is spread by mosquitos so we take prevention very seriously.

We recommend using one of the following treatments **monthly** to protect your cat from heartworm:

- Revolution topspot
- Advocate topspot
- Milbemax tablet



3) Desexing

Desexing carries both medical and behavioural benefits including a lower risk of some cancers, reduced aggression and frustration, and a reduced propensity to roam.

We recommend desexing your cat between 4 & 6 months old.





4) Flea & Tick prevention

Both these parasites abound in southeast Queensland. Flea infestations will make life miserable for your cat (and you!) while paralysis ticks can be fatal!

PREVENTATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

INDOOR CATS

- 1) **Revolution** or **Advocate** - these spot ons are great for ongoing control of fleas because it will prevent intestinal worms and heartworm as well. They are applied to the skin at the back of the neck monthly.
- 2) **Comfortis** - this is a very tasty monthly tablet, and in our experience is the most effective form of flea prevention. If you have an infestation in your house, this product will solve the problem quickly.

CATS WITH ACCESS TO OUTDOORS (even if just for an hour or two each week!)

- 1) **Frontline spray** - this is the only product that is licenced to prevent paralysis ticks (as well as fleas) in cats. It needs to be sprayed over the entire body of the cat every 3 weeks. *

*Frontline spray is alcohol based so it can be difficult to apply thoroughly.

Our own cats do not tolerate the application of Frontline spray so we have been forced to use different products:

- 1) **Seresto collar** - this product is only licenced to use on cats for fleas however anecdotally it does provide tick prevention when renewed every 4 months.
- 2) **Frontline topspot** - this product is only licenced for use to prevent fleas in cats but there is good anecdotal evidence that when applied fortnightly it provides some protection from paralysis ticks.

In the perfect world we would all use frontline spray however if this option does not work for you and your cat we feel that choosing one of the two options above is better than leaving your cat entirely unprotected.

IMPORTANT NOTE!

You can never rely on any product to provide 100% prevention against paralysis ticks so daily tick searches are essential. Points to remember when tick searching are

1. the majority of ticks (90%) will attach on the cat's head or neck
2. feeling for the tick with your fingertips is more effective than looking
3. should you find a tick it is best to remove it immediately using your fingernails, tweezers or a 'tick hook' - it does not matter if the 'head gets left in' and it does not need to be dead prior to removal
4. if you do find a tick on your pet you need to contact a vet for advice and keep the tick or take a photo of it to help us determine if it is a paralysis tick.

FINALLY...

Many of the tick and flea prevention products for dogs are highly toxic to cats, so NEVER use a product designed for dogs and always read the label carefully and ensure whatever you use is safe for use in cats.



5) Intestinal worm prevention

Regularly worming your cat stops the infestation of intestinal worms such as roundworm, hookworm, whipworm and tapeworm. Some of these parasites can infect people too, children being at most risk. Cats that hunt geckos or lizards will need a higher dose of tapewormer than is present in standard worming tablets (we will usually give a tapewormer tablet in addition to the allwormer in these cats).

Use a high quality product such as Popantel, Drontal or Milbemax:

- fortnightly until 3 months of age
- monthly until 6 months of age
- every 3 months for life



6) Microchipping

This is a safe and simple way to identify your pet if they get lost, besides that though, it is a compulsory requirement that all new animals over 8 weeks of age are microchipped.

Microchips become redundant if the contact details linked to them are not kept up to date. To update the contact details linked to the microchip go to <http://www.petaddress.com.au> . Enter the microchip number then follow the links for whichever database on which the chip is registered.



7) Nutrition

We recommend feeding a premium brand dry kitten food (ie Advance, Hill's Science Diet and Royal Canin) until your kitten is 12 months of age, then transition to a premium brand adult cat food. There are certain chronic medical conditions in cats where feeding a wet food diet may be of benefit. Your vet will recommend this in these instances.

< 8 weeks	8-16 weeks	> 16 weeks
4 meals/day	3 meals/day	2 meals/day





8) Dental care

Dental disease is the most common disease in animals, and any of you who have had a toothache will know that it is a very painful condition.

To give your pet the best chance at a healthy mouth please consider the following strategies:

- 1) Use a premium quality dry food as your cat's base diet and if you feel that they need more variety, skip the mushy foods (e.g. tinned/pouch food, mince) and feed roughly chopped lean meat.*
- 2) Feed a dental diet - complete dry food diets where the kibble is designed to clean the teeth as they eat it.
- 3) Provide dental treats such as "Greenies" or offer raw chicken wing tips (the only form of bone we would recommend feeding to a cat).
- 4) Ultrasonic scaling and polishing may be necessary to prevent advance dental disease in cats that have developed tartar and/or gingivitis despite the above.

* There are certain chronic medical conditions in cats where feeding a wet food diet may be of benefit. Your vet will recommend this in these instances.



9) Avoid Toxins

Familiarise yourself with substances that are toxic to cats. Cats are deficient in a particular detoxifying liver enzyme and as a result many chemicals and medications that are safe in dogs and humans are highly toxic to cats. For instance, many flea and tick products for dogs are potentially lethal to cats. If you don't know if something your cat has ingested is toxic, please contact a vet and ask immediately!

The toxins we most commonly encounter are:

- Lillies (all parts of the plant and flowers are highly toxic. Even licking small amounts of the pollen off their coats can cause acute kidney failure).
- Rat/snail baits.
- Flea/tick preventions for dogs.
- Human medications (e.g. paracetamol).
- Household cleaning chemicals can cause severe chemical burns to the mouth, throat and stomach if ingested. This can occur when cats groom them off their coats.

*Please note this list is not exhaustive





10) Happiness

A happy cat is one who can express his or her natural behaviours, and exists free from fear and anxiety. It is a sad fact that one of the most common reasons for a cat having to be rehomed is behavioural problems such as inappropriate urination. Not only that but stress in cats can lead to physical ailments such as bladder inflammation and skin conditions.

The Indoor Pet Initiative (<https://indoorpet.osu.edu/>) is a fantastic, free online resource which goes into environmental enrichment for cats in great detail and is well worth a read. These are not just appropriate of indoor cats, roaming can be a big problem for your cat because they are more likely to end up being attacked, fighting or getting injured. Satisfying their needs at home means they are less likely to roam.

Some suggestions from us are:

1. Plenty of interaction and play. Play behaviours such as chasing a toy mouse, ball or laser pointer helps satiate cat's' natural hunting urges and prevents boredom.
2. Make meal times engaging by challenging your cat with feeding puzzles, hidden food or foods that need to be 'worked at' for example a raw chicken wing tip.
3. Consider pheromones - 'Feliway' is a synthetic analogue of the feline facial pheromone (which cats are depositing on the legs of chairs, tables and humans when they rub their neck against them during moments of contentment). It is available in a room diffuser or spray bottle and can help counteract anxiety in cats. It is particularly useful in adjusting cats to a new household, or when introducing new pets or humans to the house.
4. Think carefully before adding to your feline family. Though most cats are fine, some cats do not like to share their homes! Tension between cats may not be externally apparent to us mere humans, but is a common cause of behavioural issues. Always use "Feliway" to ease the transition period, a diffuser lasts for 1 month and that may be all that is needed for a happy, 'multicat' household.



11) Pet Insurance

We strongly recommend pet insurance for your pets. To decide if it is right for you answer these simple questions:

- 1) Would you do anything to ensure your cat has the best possible chance to recovery from an illness/injury?
- 2) Do you have these funds readily available?

The majority of us would reply yes to the first question but no to the second. If that is the case you need pet insurance. It is not a cheap option, but it is one that you can budget for.

There is no 'one size fits all' so we can't recommend a particular company or policy but what we do advise is getting medical (illness) cover as well as accident (emergency). Cover for dental problems may also be useful. For a comparison of companies and policies, visit www.choice.com.au (you will need a membership to view the content) or www.canstar.com.au.

