

Caledonia Veterinary Clinic

Congratulations on your new pet and a warm welcome to Caledonia Veterinary Clinic! We look forward to creating a professional and compassionate bond with both you and your pet. Listed below are some of the services offered at our clinic. Please do not hesitate to call with any additional questions you may have!

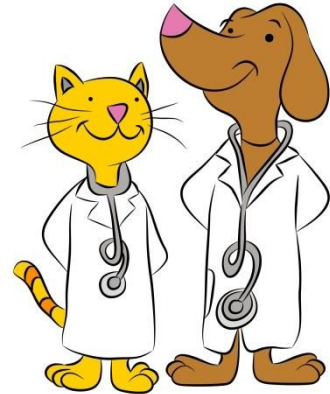
Medical Services: Comprehensive Exams, Vaccinations, Internal and External Parasite Control and Prevention, Diagnostic Testing, Microchipping, Pain Management, Senior Wellness, Spinal Manipulative Therapy, Etc.

Surgery: Routine, Soft Tissue, and Orthopedic.

Imaging and Laboratory: Digital radiology, Digital Dental Radiology, Ultrasonography and a complete In-house Lab.

Dentistry: We perform complete dental scaling/polishing, full-mouth radiographs, a complete intra-oral examination and extractions if needed.

Emergency Services: You can rest easy knowing we have a Veterinarian on-call during nonbusiness hours. Simply call our main number at 507-725-3380 if you have an emergency that cannot wait until the next business day.



WELCOME!



New Kitten Appointment Cheat Sheet

Vaccines

*RCCP Combo - Booster every 3-4 weeks until 16 weeks of age.

- Rhinotracheitis
- Calicivirus
- Chlamidia Psittaci
- Panleukopenia

*Leukemia – Given at 8 weeks or older.

*Rabies – Given at 16 weeks.



Tests

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) and Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) Combo Test

FIV: Similar to HIV in humans, causes Immune System suppression and susceptibility to other infections.

FeLV: Viral disease that attacks Immune System and leaves cat vulnerable to a host of secondary infections.

Both FIV and FeLV are transmissible from cat to cat. There is no cure for either disease; however there is a vaccine for FeLV.

Flea and Tick Preventatives and Dewormers

**NexGard
COMBO™**

*Topical

*Protects against:

- Ticks
- Fleas
- Roundworms
- Hookworms,
- Tapeworms
- Heartworms



advantage® II

*Topical

*Protects against:

- Fleas

seresto®

*Collar

*Protects against:

- Fleas
- Ticks

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)

What is Feline FIV?

FIV stands for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus. FIV is very similar to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). FIV is a virus that causes AIDS in cats; however, there is a long asymptomatic period before AIDS occurs, and our job is to prolong this asymptomatic period.

Transmission:

The major route of virus transmission is by the deep bite wounds that occur during fighting. Casual contact, such as sharing food bowls or snuggling, is very *unlikely* to be associated with transmission.

Mother cats with FIV rarely transfer the virus to their kittens, but most certainly transfer the antibodies (usually during nursing). This means that a positive FIV test in a kitten most likely indicates that the mother was FIV+.

Diagnosing:

FIV infection can be discovered using a screening test performed in your vet's office or on a blood panel. Kittens less than 6 months old may test positive due to the antibodies passed from their mother – such kittens should be retested when they are over 6 months old. Most kittens will revert to a negative status after their mother's transferred antibodies have worn off.

In a household with multiple cats, it is important to test all the cats when one cat comes up FIV+ as it is important to know who is infected and who is not. Isolation of an FIV+ cat is unnecessary in a stable household unless the FIV+ cat is likely to fight with the other residents. That said, it is important not to introduce any new cats as this is likely to lead to fighting and consequent virus transmission.

Prognosis:

The life expectancy of FIV+ cats varies. Approximately 18% die within 5 years of infection. An additional 18% are still alive during that time but experience illness from their immune-suppressed state. The remaining cats appear normal in that time frame, and many go on to live long lives, only periodically experiencing illness.

Prevention:

FIV+ cats should be kept indoors to help prevent the spread of this disease to other cats and to also minimize their exposure to infectious diseases.

Uncooked foods, meats especially, can include parasites and pathogens that a cat with a normal immune system might be able to handle but an FIV+ cat might not – stick to the major reputable cat food brands (Hill's, Purina, Royal Canin).



Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV)

What is Feline Leukemia?

Feline Leukemia Virus, a retrovirus, is a common infection of cats. It is the cause of more cat deaths, directly or indirectly, than any other organism and is widespread in the cat population.

Retroviruses are unstable, live for only minutes outside the cat's body, and are readily destroyed by most disinfectants. Because FeLV is so unstable, a new, healthy cat can be brought safely into a "contaminated" house within days of the departure of an FeLV-infected cat.

Transmission:

FeLV transmission occurs mostly through close social contact. Contact with saliva from infected cats is a primary mode of transmission because the concentration of the virus is high in saliva. However, the virus is also shed in blood, urine, feces, nasal secretions, and milk. Therefore, sharing food & water dishes, using the same litterbox, mutual grooming, and bite wounds are all possible methods of transmission.

Infected queens can infect fetuses during pregnancy. Infected queens can also infect neonates when the babies drink the infected milk.

Diagnosing:

FeLV infection can be discovered using a screening test performed in your vet's office or on a blood panel. Other diagnostic tests include radiography, bone marrow aspiration, ophthalmoscopy, and specialized antibody tests.

Cats are most vulnerable to the virus as kittens. Kittens may be tested at any age. However, infection in newborn kittens may not be detected until weeks to months after birth. Therefore, several FeLV tests during the first 6 months of life may be necessary to feel completely "safe" about a negative test result.

Clinical Signs:

There are no specific clinical signs associated with this disease. FeLV infection can lead to several distinct types of syndromes, including: cancers, neurologic problems, blood diseases, and immunosuppressive disease.

Treatment:

There is no effective treatment for feline leukemia. Treatment is mainly supportive and may require blood transfusions, prednisone, and anabolic steroids.

Prognosis:

The prognosis for infected cats is highly variable. A small percentage of FeLV-positive cats may remain healthy for several years, but the prognosis for persistently FeLV-positive cats is poor, as most of the infected cats living within multi-cat households will die within 3 years from the time of diagnosis.

Prevention: Several preventive measures can be taken to help decrease the risk of contracting FeLV. Routine testing, as well as vaccination of cats determined to be at risk, are key factors in FeLV prevention. Healthy FeLV-infected cats should be housed indoors and kept away from other cats to limit the risk of disease transmission. Multi-cat households with FeLV positive cats should not bring any new cats into the household to prevent the spread of infection.



What's Next?

After 6 months of age

- spay or neuter

1 year and up

- Rabies Vaccine Annually (required by law)
- Annual RCCP “Distemper” Vaccine
- Annual Leukemia Vaccine
- Annual Intestinal Parasite Check
- Nexgard Combo, Advantage II, or Seresto collar as directed
- Dental Cleanings as needed

****Outdoor kitties should be dewormed quarterly with Drontal if Nexgard Combo is not used monthly****

8 Years + (Senior)

- Annual Baseline/Senior Bloodwork

Dental Disease

Seventy-five percent of pets over the age of three have dental disease. Cats are not supposed to have bad breath. Dental plaque, oral diseases and other health conditions can cause bad breath. Brushing your pet's teeth and having regular dental cleanings are beneficial for your pet and your pocket book. Advanced dental disease can be costly and painful for your cat.

Deworming Protocol

Parasites can cause a variety of health problems for your pet. One of the biggest concerns is the potential for them to be spread to people. The Companion Animal Parasite Council (CAPC) recommends that kittens be dewormed at 2, 4, 6, and 8 weeks of age, then put on a monthly preventative until the pet is 6 months old. Fecal exams should be conducted two to four times yearly on adult pets depending on lifestyle factors and patient health. Keeping your cat on monthly Advantage-Multi is a simple and great way to routinely deworm and prevent parasites.

What to feed Fido or Fluffy!?!

There are many good foods out there and you don't have to break the bank when buying your pets food. However not all pet food manufactures have the same level of expertise or strict standards of quality control. This has led to some scares with foods and health concerns over the years. Here are some pointers to keep in mind when choosing a food.

1. Feed food from a well-established pet food company. The FDA has recommended sticking with the 3 major food companies: **Purina, Hill's and Royal Canin.** These companies have YEARS of research behind their diets.
2. Do not use "house-brands" or generic brands. These brands are produced by companies such as Walmart, Farm & Fleet or sold in food elevators. They often lack quality ingredients and many times pets are unable to properly digest these ingredients.
3. Avoid foods with dyes. Pet food should be all one color. Multiple colors do NOT mean it contains vegetables. It contains dyes. End of story. Green does not equal spinach.
4. Stay away from "BEG" diets – **B**outique companies, **E**xotic ingredients, or **G**rain-free diets. These diets have been linked to DCM (Dilated Cardio Myopathy). "The apparent link between 'BEG' diets and DCM may be due to ingredients used to replace grains in grain-free diets, such as lentils or chickpeas, but also may be due to other common ingredients commonly found in BEG diets, such as exotic meats, vegetables, and fruits."
5. Pets should be fed an appropriate food for their **species**, (cat or dog), **age** (puppy, kitten, adult or senior), **breed** (large or small canine) and **activity level** (in-door, weight management, sport).
Cats should eat **CAT** food and dogs should eat **DOG** food. Each has different nutritional requirements and feeding the wrong food can have detrimental effects on them.

**Lisa M. Freeman, DVM, PhD, DACVN "It's not just Grain-Free: An Update on Diet-Associated Dilated Cardiomyopathy





Intestinal parasites are parasites that live in the gastrointestinal tract of your pet. They are transmitted when your pet eats the parasite eggs or spores in contaminated soil, water, feces or food. In puppies, intestinal parasites are usually transmitted in utero. Intestinal parasites can cause malnutrition, weight loss, diarrhea, vomiting, anemia and even death. In addition to causing harm to your pet, some intestinal parasites are Zoonotic, meaning they can be transmitted to humans. Listed below are the most common intestinal parasites your pet

could become infected with.

Roundworms: This is the most common parasite of cats and dogs. Roundworms are transmitted through contaminated soil or water, eating an infected animal/rodent, and most commonly, from mother to puppy. Roundworm infections can cause vomiting, diarrhea, slow growth, poor hair coat, and a distended belly. Roundworms are zoonotic and can cause eye, lung, heart and neurologic signs in people.

Hookworms: This parasite is a blood-sucking parasite that attaches to your pet's small intestines, causing tissue damage, anemia, blood loss, and diarrhea. Hookworms are transmitted by either ingesting eggs, or by penetrating your pet's feet after walking through a contaminated area. Hookworms are also zoonotic and can be transmitted to humans.

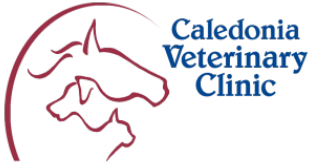
Whipworms: This parasite is again, transmitted through contaminated soil. A pet infected with whipworms can be asymptomatic. More severe infestations can cause bloody diarrhea, and if left untreated, can cause serious disease and even death. Whipworm eggs can survive years in the soil!

Tapeworms: This parasite is transmitted by your pet ingesting fleas (usually while grooming themselves), or by eating an animal/rodent that is infected with tapeworm larvae. Tapeworm infections generally do not produce any obvious symptoms in your pet, but you may notice tapeworm "segments" on your pet's rear end, or where your pet sleeps. Tapeworm segments resemble a grain of rice.

Giardia: This parasite is a microscopic, single-celled organism that lives in your pet's small intestine. Giardia is transmitted by drinking from contaminated water sources or ingesting substances that have been soiled with feces. If left untreated it can lead to Giardiasis, which in turn can cause weight loss, poor condition and even death.

Coccidia: This is another single-celled parasite that lives in the wall of your pet's intestines. It is transmitted through contaminated soil or other substances that contain infected feces. Coccidia can lead to Coccidiosis, which severe infections, especially in puppies, can cause death.

Be sure to have a fecal sample checked on your new pet as soon as possible. Also, be sure to do yearly fecal sample checks to ensure your pet is safe and parasite free!



WHY SPAY & NEUTER?

What is the surgery?

- “Spaying” is the term used for **female** animals and is the surgical removal of the ovaries and uterus.
- “Neutering” is the term used for **male** animals and is the surgical removal of the testicles.
- Fixing, sterilizing, or altering your pet are other terms for spaying or neutering.
- Spaying or neutering your pet is a very safe procedure. Call us for an appointment today!

Good for your pet! □

- Spaying or neutering your pet can decrease the risk of diseases that are expensive to treat.
- Pets that are spayed or neutered have up to an 85% lower risk of certain types of cancers (ex. mammary or testicular), and other serious health complications (uterine infections).
- Animals that are fixed generally make better companions because they are not motivated to wander in search of a mate.

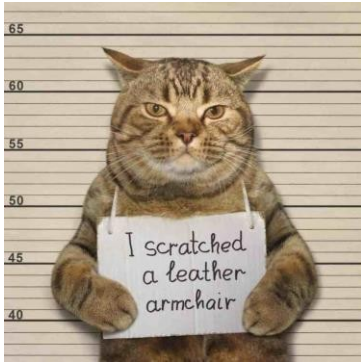
Good for you! Eliminates annoying behavioral problems.

- Altered animals are significantly less likely to mark or spray urine.
- Female animals in heat can cry incessantly, make messes, act nervous and attract males from all around. Having your pet spayed eliminates the heat cycle.
- Animals that have been spayed or neutered are less likely to bite, roam or get into fights.

Good for our community!

- A compassionate society knows there is a better way to solve overpopulation than needlessly euthanizing unwanted animals.
- Communities spend millions of dollars to control unwanted companion animals. Spaying and neutering helps reduce the number of strays and unwanted animals in our community.
- Spaying or neutering reduces an animal’s desire to roam, resulting in fewer traffic accidents and neighborhood complaints of nuisance animals.





The Potential Consequences of Declawing Your Cat

For your cat, sharpening their claws is a very natural and normal behavior. However, this behavior can be very destructive around your home, and few people are properly prepared to deal with this. In the past, declawing has been a popular elective surgery to help address this issue. More recently however, it has fallen out of favor due to long-term complications associated with the surgery. Declawing is essentially the amputation of the last bone or digit of the toe. By removing this bone, the nail is also removed. Unlike humans which are plantigrade, meaning they walk on the balls of their feet, cats are digitigrade, meaning they walk on their toes. Removing this bone changes everything about a cat's foot structure.

Changing the anatomy of the paw can result in potential nerve damage, change their gait, and cause pain in their paws and toes for life. All these things can lead to the long-term complication of arthritis.

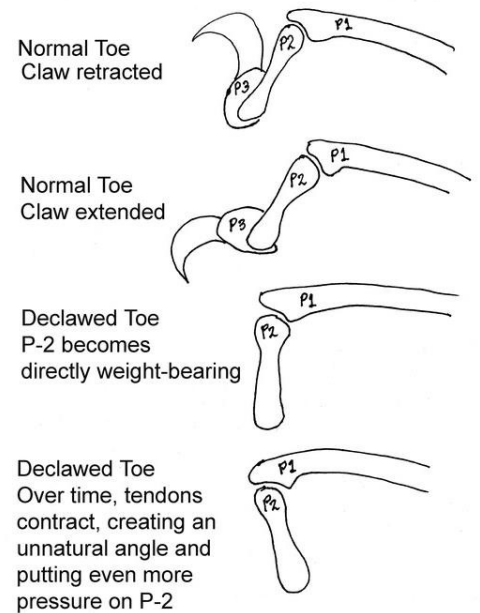
This can also hinder a cat's ability to dig in the litter box when they eliminate. Digging and burying can become painful due to the abnormal structure of their toes.

Cats that suffer from long-term pain can develop inappropriate behaviors. There is a major correlation with cats that have been declawed and litter box aversions. Cats will eliminate in inappropriate places around your home due to the pain and stress they feel when they attempt to use the litterbox.

Pain can also cause stress. Stressed cats are more likely to groom excessively. Because of the nature of their tongues, excessive grooming will often lead to hairballs, a broken and rough fur coat or complete hair loss in the over groomed areas.

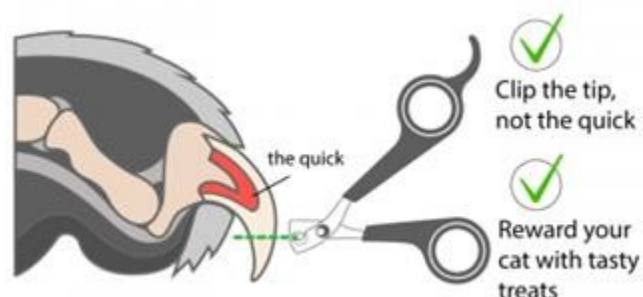
Declawed cats also tend to bite more than cats that have not been declawed. This could be due to a lack of other defenses, a decreased confidence, or to excess pain, which may not always be obvious to us.

Anatomic Changes after Declawing

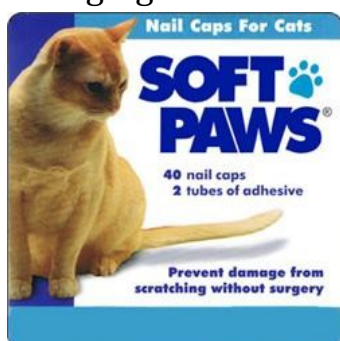


What are my other options instead of declawing?

Learning to trim your cat's nails is the first thing you can do to help with unwanted scratching. We would be happy to show you how to do this at home or we can do it for you as a scheduled tech appointment.

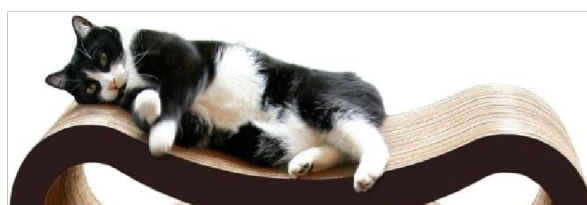
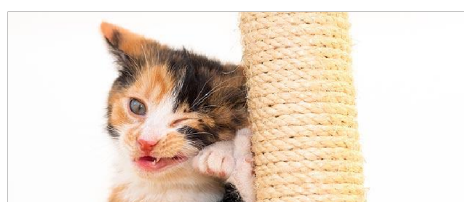


Secondly, there are vinyl nail caps available that you can glue on to protect furniture and belongings. One name brand is called Soft Paws, but there are many types available online.



These caps work wonderfully but do require some regular maintenance. Often you will have to replace a random cap as the nails grow out and the normal layers of the nail are shed off. We would be happy to show you how to do this at home as well.

Lastly, providing your cat with a scratching post that is satisfactory to his or her needs is imperative. Often, we purchase something that we find appealing to the eye or our living space, but it is either not sturdy enough, is not made of a material that is to their liking, or is a shape that a cat would not naturally be inclined to use as a scratching post. Sometimes you need to try a few different options (styles and materials) or locations for your scratching post before you present your cat with an option that makes you both happy.





Our Litterbox & Cleaning Recommendations

- 1) **NUMBER OF BOXES-** One litterbox per cat plus one extra. This always gives your cat an option to use a clean litter box.

1 cat = 2 boxes, 3 cats = 4 boxes, etc.

- 2) **CLEANING-** Scoop out all waste daily. We know this is everyone's least favorite task ☹️ But just like you don't want to use an unflushed toilet, your cat doesn't want to use a dirty litter box. **THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF CORRECTING INAPPROPRIATE URINATION.** Replace all the litter and clean the actual box once weekly.

Scoop litter daily. Clean litterboxes weekly. Replace litter weekly.

- 3) **LOCATION-** Do not keep the litterbox by your cat's food and water. They do not want to eat where they go to the bathroom. We often put the litterbox in an out-of-the-way area to reduce odor and litter scatter. But if the litterbox is too out of the way we may neglect routine cleaning. Also, cold dark basements with loud furnaces and washing machines may make cats nervous and discourage use.

Put the litterbox somewhere away from food & that is easy to get to and easy to clean.

- 4) **TYPE OF LITTER-** There are many different types of litter out there. Clumping or non-clumping, scented or non-scented, coarse or fine grained and pelleted. As well as different litter substances; clay, pine, newspaper, corn, walnuts, and sand, just to name a few. Studies show most cats prefer a non-scented fine-grain litter, but cats seem to adjust to whatever type of litter you choose, providing it is cleaned regularly. Also, changing litter types frequently can cause your cat to not want to use the box.

Find a litter that you find easy and convenient to clean, and stick with it.

- 5) **TYPE OF BOX-** There are many different types of boxes. Plain plastic, automatic cleaning, hooded or non-hooded, and designer boxes that look like furniture. Many cats **DO NOT** like the covered litterboxes, however their owners do because it helps with odor control and litter scatter. However, covered boxes also tend to keep the dirty litter "out-of-sight-out-of-mind". Automatic boxes are convenient for the owner but keep the dirty litter in a storage compartment attached to the litter box. These compartments filled with waste smell strongly and the smell can discourage a cat from using it. The more complicated the box the more often problems can occur. Bigger cats may need bigger boxes. Older arthritic cats may need shallower boxes. Cats that do not squat well may need boxes with deeper sides. Rubbermaid totes can be often be altered to fit these circumstances.

Keep it simple with a basic litter box.

- 6) **DEPTH OF LITTER-** More litter does not mean you will need to clean the litter box less often. In fact it helps hold odors. Adding extra litter is not a substitute for scooping and scrubbing.

1-2 inches of litter covering the bottom of the box is often enough.

Dental Care

Bad breath in pets may be a sign of periodontal disease and can lead to detrimental health problems! Periodontal disease begins when plaque, (a bacterial film) coats the tooth, hardens and becomes tartar, (a thick yellow-brown layer) which then irritates the gums causing them to become tender, red, and swollen. As time goes on the irritated gums begin to recede from the tooth, bleed, expose the tooth's roots, and cause your pet to feel pain when eating. If the bacteria enter the bloodstream, they can affect your pet's organs, such as the heart, liver, and kidneys.



- Most dogs & cats develop periodontal disease by 3 years of age
- Periodontal Disease is the most common health problem in dogs & cats.
- Bad breath may be a sign of periodontal disease in your pet.
- Providing routine dental care for your pet can be easy & can benefit your pet's oral & overall health!

Signs of Dental Problems

- Bad Breath
- Sensitivity around the mouth
- Loss of Appetite
- Yellow-Brown Deposits on the Teeth
- Bleeding, Inflamed, and Receding Gums
- Loose or Missing Teeth
- Pawing at the Mouth or Face
- Difficulty Chewing or Dropping Food

What can you do?

- ◆ Take your pet to their annual check-ups.
- ◆ Brush your pet's teeth.
- ◆ Feed dry dog food.
- ◆ Provide plaque-reducing food, treats, and toys!

Microchips

Permanent Identification for Your Pet

Having a pet run away or become lost can be an extremely difficult time. Is your pet hurt, scared in a shelter somewhere, or did someone else take them in thinking they were homeless?

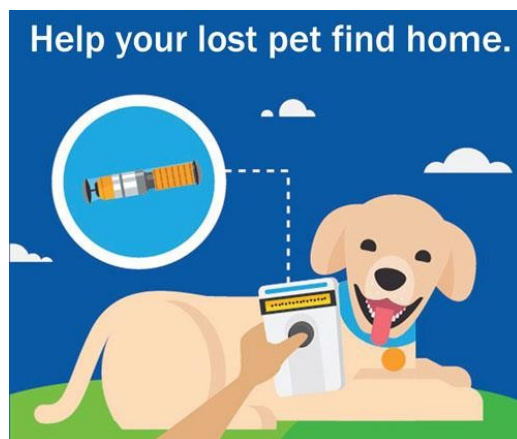
Having ID tags on your pet's collar is the easiest way for someone to identify your pet if he goes missing. But what happens if your pet's collar comes off? Or if the tag catches on something and rips off? Or, if you simply don't keep a collar on your pet?

Microchips are a permanent way to identify your dog or cat for life, and can be placed any time after 6 weeks of age. They are easy to place and inexpensive to maintain. If your pet goes missing and is taken to a shelter or Vet Clinic, their microchip is scanned, enabling staff to contact you and return your pet home safely.

The procedure for placing a microchip is actually very easy and only takes a few seconds. The chip is very small and placed at the base of the neck in between your pet's shoulder blades. A needle is used to place the chip under the skin where it will remain permanently. When scanned, your pet's identification number is revealed. By contacting the microchip database, your pet's information, including name, age, neuter status, and your contact information will be made available. Be sure to register your pet when a microchip is placed, and always keep your contact information up to date.

Please note; a Microchip is not a GPS tracking device. It simply has its own unique number that corresponds to your contact information.

Contact us today to schedule an appointment to have your pet microchipped! You'll have peace of mind knowing if your pet ever goes missing, their chances of being returned to you are greatly increased!



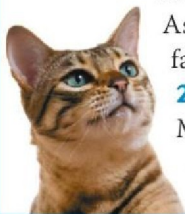
Top 10 toxins: Protect your cat from common dangers

Lilies may be beautiful in your home, but they can cause kidney failure in your cats.

The veterinarians and toxicology experts at Pet Poison Helpline have released their top 10 list of household items that generated the most poison consultations for dogs and cats in 2013. The items below are presented in order of frequency, with number one being the item that caused the most emergency calls to Pet Poison Helpline. If at any time you think your pet has ingested a toxin, call your veterinarian.

Top 10 toxins for cats

- 1) Lilies:** Plants in the *Lilium* species, such as Easter, tiger and Asiatic lilies, cause kidney failure in cats.
- 2) Household cleaners:** Most general-purpose cleaners (Windex, 409)



are fairly safe, but concentrated products such as toilet bowl or drain cleaners can cause chemical burns.

3) Flea and tick spot-on products for dogs: Those that are pyrethroid-based (Zodiac, K9 Advantix, Sergeant's) cause tremors and seizures and can be deadly to cats.

4) Antidepressants: Cymbalta and Effexor topped Pet Poison Helpline's antidepressant list in 2013. The drugs can cause severe feline neurologic and cardiac effects on ingestion.

5) Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs): Cats are even more sensitive than dogs to drugs such as ibuprofen and naproxen. Even veterinary-specific NSAIDs such as carprofen and meloxicam should be used with caution.

6) Prescription ADD/ADHD medications: These drugs have the same

toxic effects in cats as in dogs.

7) Over-the-counter cough, cold and allergy medications: Those that contain acetaminophen are particularly toxic to cats, as they damage red blood cells and cause liver failure.

8) Plants containing insoluble calcium oxalate crystals: Houseplants such as peace lilies, philodendron and pothos can cause oral and upper gastrointestinal irritation, foaming at the mouth and inflammation when ingested by cats.

9) Household insecticides: Most of these household sprays and powders are fairly safe, but it's best to keep cats away from plants after application until the products have dried or settled.

10) Glow sticks and glow jewelry: These "toys" contain a chemical called dibutyl phthalate. When it contacts the mouth, pain and excessive foaming occurs, but signs quickly resolve when the cat eats food or drinks water.

What to do if your pet gets poisoned

First, take a deep breath. The more calm, cool, and collected you are, the sooner you can seek the correct medical attention. Then get a handle on the situation by taking the following steps:

- 1) Remove your pet from the area. Make sure no other pets or children are exposed to the area, and safely remove any poisonous material.
- 2) Check to make sure your pet is breathing normally and acting fine otherwise.
- 3) Collect a sample of the material, along with the packaging, vial, or con-

tainer. You'll need that information to help your veterinarian or a pet poison expert assess the situation.

4) Don't give your dog any milk, food, salt, oil, or any other home remedies. Doing so will likely complicate the poisoning.

5) Never induce vomiting without talking to your veterinarian or a pet poison expert—doing so may be harmful.

6) Get help. Program your veterinarian's phone number into your phone, as well as an emergency veterinarian's number and a pet poison hotline number. There are two 24-hour hotlines:

Pet Poison Helpline at 800-213-6680 (\$35 per call) and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal's Animal Poison Control Center at 888-426-4435 (\$65 per call).

Remember that a pet's prognosis is always better when a toxicity is reported immediately, so don't wait to see if your pet becomes symptomatic before calling for help. Calling right away is safer for your pet and could help you save on treatment costs in the long run. Remember that there's a narrow window of time to decontaminate in cases of poisoning.

Puppies and Kittens Who Bite

Bringing home a new puppy or kitten can be a fun and exciting experience. However, the learning and development process for puppies and kittens can be challenging. Biting is a common issue for young pets and needs to be addressed properly.

Why Do Puppies and Kittens Bite?

Biting, in which a dog or cat actively and purposefully bites down with their teeth (although not necessarily to break skin) is a common behavior in puppies and kittens. Mouthing, which is a general term for dogs or cats that put their mouths/teeth on people and other pets, sometimes in a chewing manner, sometimes in a nipping manner, is also common in puppies and kittens and tends to occur for the same reasons as biting. Biting and mouthing are normal behaviors in young, developing dogs and cats and are rarely associated with aggression.

Reasons for biting include:

Biting can be a way to communicate or achieve a result in puppies and kittens. Just like with human infants and children, a young pet's communication skills are a little bit more basic and they can't do as much for themselves as they could as an adult. Biting is a way to say, "No! Stop that! I'm afraid!" or "I don't like that!" or even "Come on, come play with me!"

Play biting or mouthing during play is extremely common in puppies and kittens. It is not uncommon to see them wrestle, growl, and posture aggressively as a part of normal, healthy play. If things get out of hand, the offended youngster will yelp or distance himself until things calm down. Issues can arise when puppies and kittens play too roughly with their human owners and normal dog or cat social cues are missed because of species differences.

Biting can be associated with hunting behaviors. This is probably seen more often with cats than dogs, and may be associated with chasing or unexpected attacks. It is an instinctive ritual to help teach kittens and puppies how to hunt. Hunting behaviors, more often directed towards dog or cat housemates, can be an issue with humans, especially if the little one doesn't have animal "siblings" to play with. Their humans may be the only moving objects with which to practice this behavior.

Biting and mouthing may occur during times when adult teeth are replacing baby teeth. Mouthing is part of how they learn and gather information about food, toys, and their surroundings. Biting/nipping can be breed or genetically associated, as with herding dog breeds. Rarely, biting can be aggressive in nature for puppies and kittens.

Consequences of Biting

Biting and mouthing may be normal for puppies and kittens, but continuing to bite into adulthood can lead to issues. Normally, young animals learn to stop biting during play when their mother and siblings correct them with yelps or distancing themselves. When siblings and parents are not available to teach a little one how to behave in the family, human owners must step in. Long-term consequences of biting vary depending on the cause. For example, biting out of fear, frustration, or to avoid something can teach bad habits if not prevented. When biting achieves the desired result of getting a human to stop an action (such as biting while having nails trimmed), the youngster could potentially learn that biting to get what he wants as an adult is acceptable. The same goes for biting because of attention seeking. If a puppy or kitten is mouthy as a means to get you to play with them and give them attention, rewarding this behavior with any kind of attention (to some pets, even corrections are attention) could mean continued mouthing or attention seeking behaviors as an adult. Even mouthing because of teething can lead to bad habits and continued mouthing well beyond the onset of adult teeth if not corrected.

Regardless of why a youngster bites, biting should never be encouraged because it can lead to continued biting into adulthood, and as adults dogs and cats that bite can inflict serious damage and/or result in a poorer quality of life for themselves and their owners.

How to Manage Biting

Below are some suggestions for discouraging and preventing biting and mouthing. Remember that this is a learning process for everyone and that some suggestions will not be as effective as others depending on the reason for biting, such as play biting vs fear/avoidance.

Do not encourage mouthy play or play biting between the pet and humans. Rough play, such as wrestling or rough housing, between owners and pets can encourage mouthing behaviors and should also be discouraged in a mouthy pet.

It is important to find a way to meet the need to bite through play, chewing because of teething, and hunting behaviors.

Use time outs to de-escalate biting and mouthing behaviors and calm down your pet. This can be done by removing the pet or yourself from the pet's attention when play biting occurs, including eye contact and talking to the little one; this time out should be brief but repeated if biting continues during an interaction. Remember to come back to attention and play with love and excitement once the pet has settled down and quits biting.

Use command words, such as "sit," to distract from biting. Give a reward only if the biting stops and the command is followed. This may be easier with puppies than kittens.

When biting and mouthing, redirect the puppy or kitten to something more appropriate to chew on such as squeaky, jingly, or chew toys.

Use a high-pitched yelp noise like the siblings or mother would make or a high-pitched "ouch" when bitten. Be careful that this does not create fear or additional excitement.

In some situations, a firm, strong command such as "no bite" may be effective to distract from mouthing and biting. This command must be performed *during* a biting behavior. Again, be careful that this does not cause fear or increase excitement.

Make sure you are providing a good outlet for biting behaviors; youngsters need plenty of play time, exercise to expend some energy, safe encouragement for hunting behaviors, and so on.

Treat or food puzzles can encourage food-seeking and hunting behaviors that can decrease the need for mouthing and biting. Owners that run and/or yell when bitten may encourage and worsen inappropriate hunting behaviors.

Remember to reward for good behaviors with attention, petting, and treats. Providing the appropriate reward for a kitten might be a little more difficult than for a puppy, but food and toys still work, especially at a young age.

Veterinarians can be a valuable tool when attempts to minimize biting are unsuccessful. Discuss your concerns with your veterinarian, who may refer you to a veterinary behaviorist for more help.

Punishment for Biting

Do *not* punish a puppy or kitten for biting. Punishment, especially for a normal behavior, can prevent a puppy or kitten from learning normal skills like play biting to hone hunting skills. It can also affect the bond between the pet and humans and may even lead to fear, aggression, and/or anxiety. *Punishment does not serve to teach an appropriate behavior.* The best solution is to stay consistent with your training methods and be patient. Use management tools that encourage better actions and provide good outlets to meet the needs of both you and your young pet.

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