



Kitten Newsletter

Fleas

Fleas are an external parasite which live and breed in your home, but feed from the blood of your pet and sometimes if a pet is not available, from you.

Although adult fleas live and feed on the cat, the female flea lays eggs, which fall off into the environment. Under favourable conditions, these eggs develop first into larvae and then into pupae. The pupae contain adult fleas that lie in wait for a suitable animal host. Modern carpeted centrally-heated homes provide ideal conditions for the year round development of fleas. Even though fleas may be in your house, you probably won't see them; the eggs are too small to see without magnification and the larvae, which are just visible, migrate deep down into carpets, furniture or cracks in floors away from the light.

Fleas cause kittens to scratch, wash and lick themselves a great deal, which may result in skin irritation and in severe cases, anaemia due to the amount of blood the fleas are sucking from the kitten.

The flea acts as the intermediate host for the tapeworm. Tapeworm eggs, which are shed within tapeworm segments in faeces, are eaten by flea larvae that develop into infected fleas. Pets become infected by eating infected fleas during grooming. Any pet with fleas is likely also to have a tapeworm infestation.

How can I tell if my kitten has got fleas?

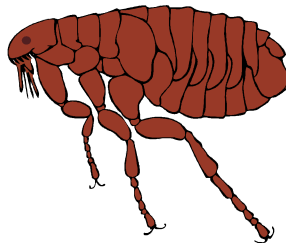
Fleas are easy to find if your kitten is heavily infested. If fleas are present in smaller numbers, it can be harder to see them. Try looking on your kitten's stomach, around the base of the tail and around the neck. Sometimes adult fleas cannot be found but "flea dirt" can be seen. This is a good indicator of the presence of fleas. Flea dirt is seen as small black specks and when placed on damp white tissue, they dissolve leaving a

reddish brown blood colour. Flea dirt may be found in bedding even when they cannot be found on the pet.

However, there are many effective treatments available from your vet which can eliminate fleas from both the pet and from the surrounding home environment.

The most popular treatments are "spot-on" varieties, which are applied to the skin at the back of the neck every 4 weeks. These are designed to kill the fleas within a few hours and have a residual action for 4 weeks.

Kittens can bring fleas with them when they go to new homes, so it is advisable to start treatment straight away with a product that is safe to use in young kittens and before they go out to prevent infestation from outside.



Prevention is always easier than curing a problem.

Flea treatments should be kept up to date regularly all year round, as fleas still breed in your home when the central heating is turned on.

It is important to treat other pets in your home too. The carpet and soft furnishings can also be treated with special household sprays should a problem arise.

We would like to remind **kittens** owners of the danger posed to **kittens** by some supermarket spot-on flea treatments. Permethrin is a drug found in some spot-on flea treatment for **dogs**. The drug is, however, very toxic to **kittens**. Please be sure to check the label and instructions of any spot-ons you administer to your animals and take care not to put dog spot-ons onto **kittens**.

If you need any help or advice on which products to use then contact either surgery.

House Cat or Adventurer

After neutering the question arises do I let my cat outside?

This is again a decision up to you and your cat. Some cats are destined to be outside and these generally are the ones that attempt to escape from every open window or door at every opportunity. If you decide to keep your cat indoors, then it is essential that you provide him/her with some basic equipment to enable them to perform certain natural behaviours, such as scratching. Cats naturally scratch at trees and fences to mark territory and to keep their nails manicured! This is fine outside but not when they decide to scratch at your antique furniture or new sofa! So provide them with a scratch post and encourage its use. Toys are also essential to prevent boredom and destruction of your home!

If you or your cat decides that outdoors is the life for them then once advised safe to do so by your vet, start allowing them access to the great outdoors. A good tip when starting this is to let them out for the first time when they are hungry. Cats seem to know where their food is! Avoid things like smearing butter on their paws as you will end up with a very buttery carpet and cat! If they are to go outside, we strongly recommend micro-chipping as the best form of identification. Please contact the surgery if you require further advice or information.



Choosing a Cattery

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At some point in your cat's life you may have to leave him/her in a cattery. We would always recommend that you visit the cattery first and the following points may help you gauge the quality of the cattery:-

- If also a kennels, do the dogs disturb the cats?
- Are the surroundings neat and tidy?
- Is there a separate kitchen for food preparation for cats?
- Were you made welcome?
- Have you seen the cattery's licence?
- Do the cats have individual sleeping accommodation?
- Do the cats have individual runs?

- Is there a shelf for the cats to sit/lie on?
- Is there a scratch post in the run?
- Is there a gap or full height solid barrier between cat units?
- Is there an interesting view for the cats?
- Is there a safety passage?
- Do the cat units have the cat's name on?
- Are the units clean?
- Is there any smell?
- Do the litter trays and bowls look clean?
- Is there a form of heating for each cat?
- Do the cats in residence look contented?
- Have you been asked about vaccinations?
- Have you been asked about your cat's diet?
- Have you been asked about your cat's health?
- Does the proprietor seem well informed and caring?
- If your cat is already on medication, check that they are prepared to administer it.

Good catteries get filled up very quickly so book early!

Pain in Cats

Cats are masters of pain disguise! A cat in pain may:

- * Stop interacting with people
- * Stop eating and/or drinking
- * Sit very still
- * Seem hunched or tense
- * Not lie on their sides or stretch
- * Not groom
- * Show temperament changes
- * Bite, rub or chew at an injury
- * Less commonly, show aggression, vocalisation and inability to settle

Chronic pain is not easy to recognise and can be put down to "old age", but cats may be less active, jump less and be unwilling to go out. Changes in behaviour are important clues.

If you are concerned about your kitten showing any of the above signs, then contact either surgery for advice.

