



## **LIST OF TOPICS FOR YOUR KITTEN'S THIRD VISIT**

Age Comparison Chart

Boarding Facilities: How to Choose One for Your Cat

Keeping Your Indoor Cat Happy and Healthy

Lifestage Wellness Testing

Wellness Testing

Flip the Lip (a healthy mouth means a healthy pet)

The Obesity Epidemic

Gastrointestinal Foreign Bodies

How to Recognize Pain in Your Cat

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# AGE COMPARISON CHART

How old is my pet, really?

Pet's Age	Estimated Equivalent Age in Human Years			
	Cats	Dogs		
		Small/Medium	Large Breed	Giant Breed
1	7	7	8	9
2	13	14	16	18
3	20	21	24	26
4	26	27	31	34
5	33	34	38	41
6	40	42	45	49
7	44	47	50	56
8	48	51	55	64
9	52	56	61	71
10	56	60	66	78
11	60	65	72	86
12	64	69	77	93
13	68	74	82	101
14	72	78	88	108
15	76	83	93	115
16	80	87	99	
17	84	92	104	

18	88	96	109	
19	92	101		
20	96	105		
21	100	109		
22	104	113	PEDIATRIC	
23	108		ADULT	
24	112		SENIOR	
25	116		GERIATRIC	



## CHOOSING A BOARDING FACILITY FOR YOUR CAT

The best way to decide on a boarding facility is to research the options available in your area. You can start by phoning them and asking questions. When you phone, ask if you can stop by for a visit. If the owners think it would be a bad idea, then you might not want to leave your pet there. A reputable boarding facility shouldn't mind showing you around so that you feel comfortable with where your cat will be staying while you are away. If you are still concerned, consider dropping by unannounced during the hours the facility is open.

### Some things you might want to look for:

Do the cats look comfortable in the enclosures?

Is the place clean, tidy, and organized?

Does the place smell bad?

Are all the pets identified?

Do all the pets have a file that lists such things as what they are fed, who their regular vet is, and if they are on any medications?

### Some questions you might want to ask:

Can I bring my cat's own food?

Can I bring my cat's own type of litter or litter box?

How often will my cat be fed?

Will you give my cat medication if required?



Is my cat let out for exercise?

Is the exercise area indoors or out? Is it secure?

Is my pet going to be in contact with other pets?

Can I decline contact with other pets?

If they have contact, how do you handle fights, and keep track of who is eating and drinking?

What happens if my pet gets sick while I'm away?

Does my cat require up to date vaccines? Which vaccines are required?

The one thing that you want to be sure of is that your cat will be safe and comfortable when boarded. You want to be confident that your pet is in good hands while you are away

## KEEPING YOUR INDOOR CAT HAPPY & HEALTHY

Cats are becoming the most popular pets in North America, with over 70 million pet cats in the United States alone. The lifestyle of the average pet cat has changed over the years, so that over fifty percent of pet cats are now kept exclusively indoors. Statistics show that the average life span of indoor cats is 14 years or more, while the average for cats that are allowed to roam free outdoors is reduced to 4 years.

### THE BENEFITS OF AN INDOOR LIFE:

- Less likely exposure to toxins, parasites, and infectious disease
- Less potential for injury (i.e., hit by car, cat bites) or accidental death
- Less impact on the songbird population

### THE DRAWBACKS TO LIVING INDOORS:

- Less exercise and potential for weight gain
- Boredom, leading to overeating and inappropriate behaviours



### 10 WAYS TO KEEP YOUR INDOOR CAT HAPPY:

1. **Playtime.** Cats are natural hunters. Regular interaction with you and interactive toys provides enrichment. Pet owners can invent inexpensive playthings from paper bags and cardboard boxes or play interactive games using a flashlight, laser pointer, ping pong ball or ball made from aluminum foil.
2. **Resting.** Cats spend much time "sleeping", or rather resting, always alert. A comfortable, undisturbed safe spot is desired by all cats.
3. **Feeding.** Many cats prefer to eat in a quiet location. Food and water should be away from litter and noise. We recommend feeding measured meals of both canned and dry food in amounts designed to avoid obesity. Canned food naturally encourages water intake.
4. **Drinking.** Cats generally don't drink enough water for ideal health. Most cats prefer a wide shallow water bowl to a typically small deep cat dish, and some prefer running water. Cat fountains are a great idea.
5. **Scratching.** Even declawed cats continue to "scratch" to mark their scent on their surroundings. A post or pad should be in an easily accessible area.
6. **Perching.** Cats enjoy climbing structures and perches near a window to watch the birds outside.

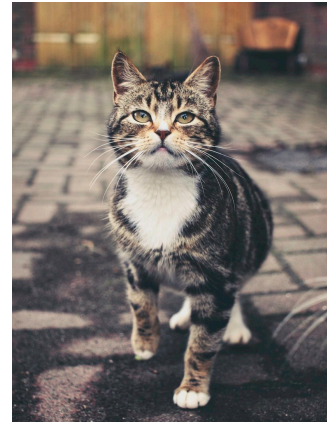
7. **Litter Box Care.** You should have at least one box per cat. Types of litter and boxes vary as do cats' preferences. The box should be scooped daily, and generally unscented clumping litter in an open box located in a quiet location is preferred.
8. **Grooming.** Both short-haired and longer-haired breeds will benefit from regular brushing, and most enjoy the interaction. All cats need nails trimmed monthly or more often.
9. **Routine.** Cats don't generally like change. If you must change food or litter, do so gradually, still offering the original version alongside the new until you know your cat will accept the change.
10. **Healthcare.** Cats hide illness very well. This is a protective mechanism in the wild. At minimum, a yearly visit to the veterinarian can help detect and prevent obesity, dental disease, and other conditions threatening health and happiness.

Fortunately, we, as cat lovers, can provide stimulation for our indoor cats and enrich their lives. The idea is to create an environment in which the cat is happy and gainfully occupied. **For more ideas,** visit [The Ohio State University Indoor Pet Initiative](#).

## LIFESTAGE WELLNESS TESTING

Different breeds and individuals age at variable rates, but in general, your pet's age can also indicate their lifestage.

Puppy or Kitten = under 1 year  
Adult = 1-6 years  
Mature = 7+ years



Larger breeds tend to age more quickly than smaller breeds, and certain breeds or individuals are more predisposed to certain diseases. Your veterinarian will consider these factors when making wellness testing recommendations for your pet.

When planning your pet's wellness care, we will generally follow the guidelines below for wellness testing:

Recommended Test	Lifestage	WHEN?
Fecal testing	All	Yearly

Heartworm testing (may be combined with tests for other diseases)	All	Yearly or every other year (in dogs, dependent on lifestyle risk)
Baseline blood and urine tests	Adult	At 4-5 years old
Early Disease Detection blood and urine tests	Mature	At 7+ years old

After age 7, we recommend continued Early Disease Detection testing every other year or more often for monitoring depending on health status.

## WELLNESS TESTING

### What is Wellness testing?

Wellness testing is the term given to a group of tests performed on an apparently healthy pet.

### Why do Wellness testing?

- **To establish baseline** laboratory values for the individual pet while healthy.  
These values can then be used to compare to future test results.
- **For early disease detection.**  
Pets cannot tell you how they are feeling, and as a result, disease may be present before you are aware of it. If a disease or condition can be detected before a pet shows signs of illness, we can often take steps to manage or correct the problem before irreparable damage is done. Wellness testing is particularly important in the middle aged and senior pet, since there is a greater chance that underlying disease may be present.

### How often is Wellness testing done?

Testing may be recommended once yearly or more, depending on your pet's **age** and specific health concerns.

### What is involved in Wellness testing?

There are three main categories of wellness testing: blood tests, urine tests, and fecal tests. Within each category, the veterinarian will determine how extensive the testing should be. Other tests such as blood pressure, eye pressure, chest x-rays or abdominal ultrasound may be recommended as well, depending on the patient's individual risk factors.

- **Blood Tests**  
**The Complete Blood Count (CBC)** provides details about the number, size, and shape of the red and white blood cells and identifies the presence of any abnormal cells. Anemia, inflammation, infection, certain cancers, and bleeding disorders can be detected.

**The Biochemical Profile** provides information about how well the various organs of the body are working (i.e., liver, kidney, and pancreas), evaluates electrolytes, proteins, and can be the first step in detecting certain metabolic diseases. Measurement of thyroid hormone screens for an over or under-active thyroid gland.

- **Urine Tests**

A urinalysis involves an analysis of the chemical components in urine, as well as a microscopic examination of the cells and solid material present in urine. Urinalysis provides information about how well the kidneys are working, identifies the presence of inflammation or infection, and may detect the presence of underlying metabolic diseases such as diabetes. Urinalysis is a particularly important component of senior wellness testing because of the high rate of kidney disease in older pets.

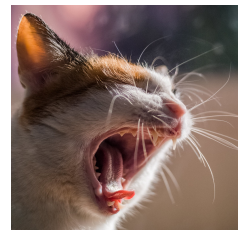
- **Fecal Tests**

Most of the time, a fecal analysis is done with the use of a microscope to determine if any intestinal parasite (worm) eggs are being shed in the feces. The general appearance or consistency of the feces can also be an indication of disease and may lead to recommendation for further testing.

## "FLIP THE LIP!"

A healthy mouth means a healthy pet.

Did you know?



- Dental disease is the most common disease in both dogs and cats - by the time they are three years old, more than 70% of pets have some form of dental disease.
- Left untreated, dental disease can make eating, play, and other day-to-day activities painful for your pet.
- Dental disease doesn't stay in the mouth - inflamed gums allow dangerous bacteria access to the bloodstream, where they shower important organs, leading to respiratory problems, heart disease, kidney and liver diseases, diabetes, and more.

How will you know if your pet has dental disease? **Bad Breath is one clue!** Bacteria forms a film of **plaque** on the teeth, and breath gets gross. If that plaque is not removed, it starts to thicken and harden into tartar. **Tartar** is a yellow-brown buildup that you can see on the teeth - but by the time you see it, tartar is also below the gum line, where it causes inflammation called **gingivitis**. If left untreated, gingivitis progresses to **periodontal disease**: swollen bleeding gums, chronic pain, loose and broken teeth, and infection.

**The bad news** is most pets never show any symptoms of dental disease. Even those with painful mouths will continue to eat and even play with toys. Pets instinctively hide pain as, in the wild, pain is seen as a weakness.

**The good news** is there is plenty you can do to keep your pet's mouth clean and healthy.



Today, we may have recommended a full dental cleaning. This is much like we would get at our dentist, but your pet must be under anaesthesia, because even the best-trained pet won't tolerate the scraping and polishing and probing under the gums that is required to do a thorough job.

To prevent dental disease, we recommend some or all of the following:

- A prescription diet that cleans the teeth and has the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC) seal of approval.
- **SAFE** dental chews that are designed to help remove plaque.
- Brushing your pet's teeth regularly with a pet-safe toothpaste (human toothpaste is toxic to pets)
- A specially designed and safe water additive

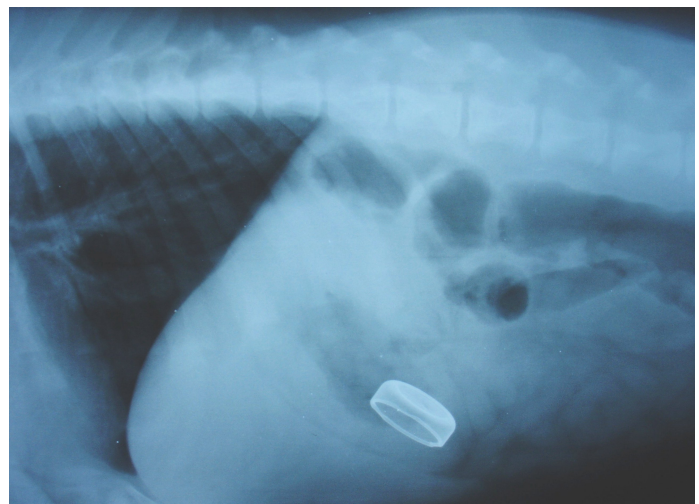


## GASTROINTESTINAL FOREIGN BODIES

Can you believe they eat these things?

Our pets like to play with things and play often involves chewing. Chewing can lead to accidental swallowing, and potential disaster can ensue. Pets of any age can get into trouble, but young dogs and cats are most at risk. Common objects, or "foreign bodies", that are sometimes swallowed include:

- Toys, especially the squeakers from dog toys
- Socks, underwear, nylons
- Rocks, sticks, pine needles
- Corn cobs
- Balls
- Jewelry, coins
- Leashes and collars
- Plastic bags
- Fishhooks
- Tinsel, ribbon
- Elastic bands, hair ties
- Ear plugs
- Bathroom garbage (dental floss, feminine hygiene products)





- Kitchen garbage (bones, foil, packaging)
- Sewing needles (especially tempting to cats when attached to thread), yarn
- Wooden skewers with meat attached (we cannot see the skewers on an x-ray!)

The list goes on. If the object does not pass and causes obstruction or partial obstruction, surgery will be needed to remove it. Swift diagnosis allows for prompt removal of the foreign body before the bowel is irreparably damaged. In more advanced situations, sections of damaged bowel must be removed and in the worst possible scenario, the intestine breaks open and spills bacteria and digested food throughout the abdomen. This latter possibility is associated with remarkably high death rate and should be avoided.

Sometimes the pet ingests a stringy object such as tinsel, yarn, or pieces of fabric. These objects can cause the intestine to bunch up on itself like a drawstring. They may also saw right through the intestine, leading to a much more serious situation. This can also happen when a needle is caught under a cat's tongue, leaving the attached thread to trail down to the stomach and intestines.

**Prevention is, by far, the best medicine:** keep these and other hazards out of your pet's reach and inspect toys regularly to ensure safety. If you have reason to suspect your pet has eaten something they shouldn't have, contact us right away for advice.

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE PAIN IN YOUR CAT

Cats are masters at hiding pain and illness. If a cat was in the wild and showed pain or was acting unwell, it would be at risk from predators. The instinct to protect oneself is strong, and it means it can be difficult to tell if your cat is sick or in pain.



**The following can be subtle signs of pain in cats:**

- Decrease in grooming. This may be noticed as the appearance of matting or dander.
- Change in litter box habits, such as missing the box or eliminating elsewhere entirely.
- Reduction in mobility. This may present as a cat who can no longer jump up on things like before, or you may notice your cat taking an "alternate route" to favourite perches to avoid jumping too far.
- Resenting being picked up or petted when the cat liked that before.
- Change in personality: aggressive or short-tempered or withdrawn, hiding.
- Sitting still and hunched up.
- Excessive purring, meowing or unusual vocalizations are sometimes displayed by cats in pain.
- Loss of appetite, vomiting.

- Change in facial expression (ears back or sideways, eyes "squinty").

The causes of pain in cats can be as varied as they are in humans, but in middle-aged to older pets, osteoarthritis would be one of the most common causes of chronic pain. It has been estimated that more than 90% of cats over the age of 10 years have some degree of arthritis in the joints. Osteoarthritis is diagnosed on history, physical examination and x-rays of the joints, and treatments are available to help with comfort.

**Please do not give ANY medications to your cat without first asking your veterinarian.**

Cats are very sensitive to the side effects of many pain medications and some over-the-counter pain remedies used for people are toxic and potentially deadly to cats (ie. Advil® and Tylenol®). Also, a pain medication prescribed for one problem may not be safe for another.

No one deserves to be in pain, and your pet is no exception. Effective pain management options are available, and sometimes the only way to know if your pet has been in pain is to have your veterinarian prescribe a course of pain medication and see if you notice behaviour changes in your pet. None of us want our pets to suffer in silence. Talk to us if you think your cat is in pain so we can help.



## TOP 5 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PET FOOD

Reading labels and information online can be overwhelming and confusing, and not all information you read is factual. Here are the top 5 things you should know when choosing a pet food for your dog or cat:



1. **Credentials.** The pet food manufacturer should utilize at least one board-certified veterinary nutritionist (i.e., ACVN: American College of Veterinary Nutrition or ECVN: European College of Veterinary Comparative Nutrition) to formulate their diets. To determine this, you usually need to investigate through the company website or contact the company directly.
2. **AAFCO Statement.** Look for the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) statement on the label, which designates the lifestage the food is indicated for (this may be different than what is conveyed on the front of the bag). A food that meets AAFCO requirements for "all lifestages" means it is in fact, a kitten or puppy food formulation, and may not be ideal for an adult, overweight, or aging pet.

3. **Ingredients.** Pets derive nutrients from the ingredients in their food. Some ingredients may sound more appetizing to humans but may be less nutritious than other ingredients that seem less appealing. Some manufacturers may add unproven ingredients to diets solely for marketing purposes to attract consumers. Ingredients are listed on labels in order of weight, including water, so ingredients with high water content (like "chicken") are going to appear higher on the list than similar amounts of dry ingredients (like "rice" or "chicken meal" - cooked, dehydrated chicken meat) even though they may contribute fewer nutrients to the overall diet.

4. **Grain-Free.** Whole grains, rather than being fillers, contribute valuable nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, essential fatty acids, and fiber, to diets while helping to keep the fat and calories lower. Most dogs and cats are very efficient at digesting and utilizing nutrients from grains. Allergies to grains are very uncommon in pets and feeding a food free of grains does NOT prevent allergies in non-allergic pets. Many grain-free diets contain starches such as those from sweet potatoes or tapioca (cassava) in place of grains. These ingredients often provide fewer nutrients and less fiber than whole grains, while costing more.

5. **By-products.** By-products (mainly organ meats) often provide more nutrients than muscle meats on a per weight basis, are important components of many pet foods, and even considered delicacies for humans in other countries. The term by-product comes from the fact that these are the leftovers from animal carcasses once the desirable (for North Americans) muscle meat has been removed for human consumption. Mammal by-products by AAFCO definition **DO NOT INCLUDE** hair, hooves, horn, hide trimmings, or intestinal contents. Like all ingredients, the quality of by-products can vary, so it is important to select manufacturers who have stringent internal quality control standards.