



KITTEN INFORMATION

St James Veterinary Group are committed to the best possible patient and client care. Our staff are friendly and approachable and will be happy to help you with any queries you may have. Please feel free to discuss any problems with the vet, or telephone for advice from one of our experienced reception/nursing staff at any of our branches.

Vaccinations

The vet or nurse will always perform a thorough health check and examination of your kitten before administering any vaccines. Injectable vaccines are combined into a single injection, so your kitten only has to have one needle each time. This is given under the skin at the back of the neck and is well tolerated by the vast majority of kittens.

Your kitten will need a course of two injections to protect them from the main infectious diseases that cause cat flu (**Feline Calicivirus (FCV)**, **Feline Herpesvirus (FHV-1)**), enteritis (**Feline Panleukopaeniavirus (FPLV)**) and leukaemia (**Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV)**).

They may have already been given a vaccination before you got them, if so, our vet will look at the vaccination card and discuss which additional vaccinations are needed. **Please bring any vaccine information you have with you to your appointment.**

We recommend an annual health check and booster vaccines to make sure your cat's protection is kept up to date. Booster vaccinations are given yearly for FCV and FHV-1 and every three years for FPLV and FeLV.

- **FCV – Feline Calicivirus** – It is spread by direct contact with other infected cats or contact with their saliva, or the discharge from their nose or eyes. This is one of the two main causes of cat flu. It causes fever, weepy eyes, snotty noses, mouth ulcers and gingivitis (sore gums) and pneumonia. In rare cases can cause severe body-wide inflammation, multi organ failure and death.
- **FHV-1 – Feline Herpesvirus (type 1)** – It is spread by direct contact with other infected cats or contact with their saliva, or the discharge from their nose or eyes. This is the other main cause of cat flu. It causes fever, weepy eyes, eye ulcers, snotty noses and sneezing. Sometimes the damage from this virus can result in a cat with chronic lifelong respiratory issues. Cats can become persistently infected with the virus and may have “flare ups” of symptoms in times of stress.
- **FPLV – Feline Panleukopaeniavirus (AKA Feline Parvovirus/Feline Infectious Enteritis)** – Similar to dog parvovirus, this can survive for long periods of time in the outdoor environment. It causes sudden onset severe gastrointestinal signs, vomiting and diarrhoea with blood, fever, loss of appetite, low white bloods cells, dehydration, shock and death. Animals become unwell very quickly and it is frequently fatal.
- **FeLV – Feline Leukaemivirus (FeLV)** – This is mostly spread through close contact with infected cats, such as mutual grooming and sharing of food bowls. It affected the blood cells and causes immunosuppression and anaemia. It also makes infected cats much more likely to develop

certain types of cancer such as lymphoma and leukaemia. Infected cats usually have a life expectancy of 3-4 years after diagnosis.

Your kitten might seem a little quiet after their injection, especially for the first day or so. This is normal whilst their immune system is responding to the vaccination. They may also develop a swelling at the site of injection.

If they seem very unwell, are not eating, or have other signs of ill health, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We recommend your kitten stays indoors for 3-4 weeks after the final vaccination as they are not fully immune until this time. We strongly recommend that your kitten is also neutered and microchipped before they venture outdoors.

Microchipping

A microchip is about the size of a grain of rice and is inserted under the skin at the back of the neck as a permanent form of identification. If your pet becomes lost and is taken to a vet or rescue centre, the microchip enables your pet to be identified and returned to you. This can be placed at the time of either vaccination or neutering.

Worming and Flea Treatments

There are many flea, tick and worming products available, and it can be a bit confusing to know what to choose.

Prescription treatments are the most effective; these can only be supplied to animals that have been examined by a vet in the last 12 months. We recommend treating your cat for fleas all year round as effective prevention is much simpler than curing an infestation. We recommend flea treatment even in indoor-only cats as we can bring the eggs and larvae into the house on our shoes and clothes, either from outside or from other households where fleas are present. Some cats are at risk of acquiring ticks, depending on the area you live in. All cats should be given regular worm treatment; this will need to be more frequent in those cats that go outdoors and especially in those that like to hunt. We recommend regular treatment for both roundworms and tapeworms.

Please let your vet know any worming or flea treatments that your kitten has already received with the breeder or since you got them home.

Pet Health Club

To help spread the cost of yearly vaccinations and regular parasite treatment we offer a Pet Health Club.

This is a monthly direct debit scheme that gives you great savings each year on the costs of preventative products for your pet as well as discounts on neutering, food and dental treatment. Please ask for more information.

Neutering

We recommend neutering your kitten from 16 weeks of age, this will usually be around 2-3 weeks after their second vaccination and ideally before they start going outside. Neutering prevents unwanted pregnancies; female cats can become pregnant from 5 months old or earlier and come into season every 21 days from Spring to Autumn.

Neutering male cats helps reduce roaming, fighting and territorial behaviour. Fighting cats will sometimes develop abscesses from bites, these usually need veterinary treatment; they are painful and make the cat feel unwell. Fighting also puts them at risk of getting FIV, the Feline Immunodeficiency Virus. As the name suggests this can affect their immune system, there is no vaccine and no cure. Reduced roaming activity also reduces the likelihood of road traffic accidents.

Pet Insurance

Just like us, pets will at some point fall ill or have an unexpected injury; but for pets there is no NHS to absorb the cost. Pet insurance helps owners plan and cover unexpected vet's fees. We strongly advise you to have pet insurance. To give peace of mind, after your kitten's first visit to us we can introduce you to PetPlan® who offer 4 weeks of FREE cover whilst you consider the options. There are numerous pet insurance companies in the UK offering many different types and levels of cover. For more information, please request a copy of our leaflet "understanding pet insurance".

Socialisation and Training

Kittens love to play, and play is how they learn! The critical socialisation period for cats, where they learn what is safe and what is scary, is the first 7-8 weeks of their life, so this will have passed before they come to live with you. However, you still have a very important role to play in helping your kitten to get used to the world of humans. Introduce them to new things slowly and don't force them to interact with things when they are frightened.

Get your kitten used to having their ears, paws, mouth and legs touched, as they might when they are at the vets. If they are used to this kind of handling, then coming to see us is much less stressful for them. It's also a good idea to introduce brushing/grooming your kitten, especially if they have long fur that will need regular maintenance.

Encourage your kitten to interact with you and to play with toys, these might be moving toys or food dispensing toys. They will need something they are allowed to scratch their claws on such as a scratching post or box.

Make sure that they have somewhere with a bit of height that they can climb onto to feel safe (windowsill, bookshelf, cat tower). Try to have more than one litter tray than the number of cats in the house and place them away from their food and water. Ideally try to not have their food and water bowls directly next to each other.

Further advice can be found at <https://www.cats.org.uk>

