

Cats Need Regular Veterinary Care

30.4% of households in the United States own at least one cat. Only a small number of those cats see a veterinarian yearly, even though they are an important part of the family. Caring for your cat, including regular visits to your veterinarian, is part of a healthy life for your feline friend and the people that live with them.

Make the Visit Positive

In a recent survey, most cat owners avoid the veterinarian because of the stress during travel and the visit. Cat owners can take a proactive approach to training their cat and making visits as stress-free as possible. Just like training a dog to properly walk on a leash, cats need to be trained to use a carrier. Starting as a kitten is best, but any age cat can be trained. A carrier should be left out so the cat can come and go as they please. Plastic carriers where the top can be easily removed are best. Next, the cat should be fed in the carrier, so they learn it is a positive place. Once the cat easily goes in and out of the carrier without stress, short car rides will help accustom your cat to traveling. Using a pheromone product called feliway, can help relax your cat. When traveling to the veterinarian, include a familiar blanket in the carrier and withhold food for a couple hours to prevent car sickness.

Yearly Visits are Key

Cats need regular vaccinations, deworming and physical exams to keep them healthy, just like dogs. All cats need to be current on their rabies vaccine, since this virus is deadly to people. All it takes is one escape out of the house or a bat in the house for a cat to be exposed to rabies. All cats should be current on their distemper combination vaccine, which includes panleukopenia, rhinotracheitis and calicivirus. Once your cat is finished with their kitten series rabies and distemper vaccines are usually boosted every three years. For cats that go outdoors, feline leukemia vaccine is needed to keep them healthy.

Yearly physical exams are very important for cats. Obesity and dental disease are the top two problems that are detected in cats 1-7 years of age. Both of these conditions can shorten your pet's lifespan by two years or more, and they can lead to other health problems. During a physical examination, detailed weight loss plans will be created for your cat, along with plans for regular home dental care or professional dental cleanings. Cats are very good at hiding any illnesses, and problems may not be evident until the medical condition is very severe.

Senior Cats Need Special Care

Cats over 7 years of age are considered to be senior pets. Senior cats need physical examinations every 6 months and yearly blood screens. Many cats can develop chronic conditions. If caught early, these chronic conditions can be treated or managed. Common conditions are hyperthyroidism, chronic kidney disease and diabetes. These conditions can be easily detected with basic bloodwork. Dental care and weight management are even more important as your cat ages. Weight loss is a big indicator that an underlying medical condition is present in your cat.

Disclaimer: This written content is meant to be educational and is not medical advice. Always consult a veterinarian about medical advice for your pet.