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Maine Coast Veterinary Hospital Preventive Care Recommendations for Cats

Feline Preventative Care Summary

Core Vaccines	Distemper/Rhinotracheitis/Calicivirus (FVRCP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given at 8, 12 and 16 weeks Boostered annually and then every 3 years 	Rabies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given at 12-16 weeks • Boostered annually
“Non-Core” Vaccines	Feline Leukemia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given to outdoor or at risk cats at 12 and 16 weeks • Boostered annually 	
Parasite Control and Treatment	Kittens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De-wormed several times between 8 and 16 weeks 	Adults <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor cats or avid hunters de-wormed prophylactically every 4 months, or treated year round with a topical preventative • Additional de-worming if needed
Fecal Monitoring	Kittens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one fecal checked during initial visits • Additional fecals checked during first year 	Adults <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual fecals for all indoor cats • Annual or twice a year fecals for all outdoor cats
Flea and Tick Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flea and Tick prevention given year round 	
Feline Leukemia/ Feline Aids Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All kittens tested during their initial vaccine series • All outdoor cats tested regularly 	

Preventive care recommendations vary somewhat for each individual pet. Lifestyle of the client and pet (and associated risk factors), concurrent disease states, as well as philosophy of the client all contribute to determining the best recommendations. We will make every effort to determine this for each individual pet. What follows are our general recommendations, which apply to the majority of our patients, for preventive care.

Feline Vaccinations

All cats should receive the following “core” vaccines:

- **Rabies:** should be given at 12-16 weeks of age, then annually with a non-adjuvanted vaccine.
 - *Rabies is an extraordinarily dangerous, invariably fatal viral disease that can be passed to humans. It is transmitted usually by the bite of an infected animal, but contact with bodily fluids of an infected animal can also cause transmission of the disease. Bats are always*

considered “rabies suspect” and have been known to transmit the virus by scratching. It is possible for any of us to get a bat inside the house, so even indoor cats need to be vaccinated. We insist on this vaccine (except in rare disease states) for the safety of you, your pet, and our staff.

- Note: A 3-year vaccine is available for cats that may be outdoor/difficult to catch, but we prefer not to use it if possible. Though rare, cats can develop a tumor at the site of vaccination, and using the “non-adjuvanted” (1 year) vaccine reduces this risk considerably.
- Distemper/Rhinotracheitis/Calicivirus (FVRCP): this is a combination vaccine and should be given at 8, 12, and 16 weeks of age, again at approximately 1 year, then every three years.
 - *Feline “Distemper” is actually a misnomer; the disease is caused by feline parvovirus and causes “feline panleukopenia”. The disease can be fatal and causes fever, diarrhea, and a drop in white (infection fighting) blood cells, which leaves them open to overwhelming bacterial infections. If a female is infected during pregnancy, kittens may be lost or have permanent neurological disease.*
 - *Rhinotracheitis is caused by a feline herpes virus and results in upper respiratory disease – conjunctivitis, nasal discharge, sneezing, sometimes coughing, and corneal ulceration [a painful eye condition] are possible signs. This herpes virus shares one feature with the human herpes virus in that can remain in the body even though there may be no signs of disease. (The feline herpes virus is not transmissible to humans.) Particularly after stress, signs may return with varying degrees of severity. Cats at highest risk are those housed in close proximity as in shelters, pet stores, or cattery situations.*
 - *Calicivirus also causes upper respiratory disease similar to rhinotracheitis virus, but signs are usually milder. There is however a newer strain of the virus that can cause much more severe signs. The vaccine we use at MCVH should be protective for both strains.*

There is really only one “non-core” feline vaccine:

- Feline Leukemia: should be given to cats that will be unsupervised outdoors or apt to come into contact with unvaccinated cats; it is also recommended that kittens receive this vaccine, until owners get a feel for whether they will be apt to “sneak” outdoors. Cats that live in multiple cat households may also need this vaccine, depending on the circumstances. It is given at 12 and 16 weeks, then yearly thereafter. The first time an adult receives this vaccine, it needs to be boosted 3-4 weeks later.
 - *Feline leukemia is caused by a “retrovirus” that causes immunodeficiency (susceptibility to a wide variety of diseases, including cancers). It is transmitted primarily via exposure to an infected cat’s eye or nasal secretions, or by bite wounds.*
- Feline Immunodeficiency virus, or FIV (a similar virus to human HIV) is also a disease transmitted cat-to-cat via bite wounds. There is a vaccine for this disease but there are a number of problems with it, including unknown effectiveness, causing the cat to test positive in the future for FIV (leaving it very unclear if the cat has the disease or not), and possibly enhancing the ability of the virus to penetrate into host cells. For these reasons we do not recommend vaccinating at this time.

Feline Testing:

- Feline Leukemia/Feline Immunodeficiency Test (FELV/FIV): All kittens should be tested during their initial kitten vaccine series and any new cat to a household should be tested. Kittens can get Feline Leukemia or Feline Aids in utero from an infected mother, or can become infected by exposure to other infected cats or kittens. All outdoor cats should be tested regularly. Any outdoor cat with fighting wounds or a wound of unknown origin should be tested.

If you have any questions about the material presented in this handout, please feel free to call our office. We will be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have. We are available Monday-Friday 7:30AM to 5:00PM and Saturday 8:00AM to 12:00PM. During these hours we can be reached at **207-374-2385**.