



Hinsdale  
Humane  
Society



## Your New Cat

Hinsdale Humane Society

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# Congratulations!

Thank you for adopting a companion animal from Hinsdale Humane Society!  
This booklet is designed to address many of the questions you may have about how to care for your new cat. Please call our **Behavior Helpline** if you need any additional information or advice. **630.323.5637**

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## Getting Prepared:

Before you bring your new cat or kitten home, it is important to “kitty proof” (for his safety as well as that of your belongings) and to purchase a few basic supplies. Here is a quick check list to get you started:

- Prepare a safe room for your new cat, such as a bathroom or small spare bedroom. Place the litter box at one end with the food, water dishes and bed at the other. Allow your cat lots of time to adjust. Keep the cat in this safe place for the first several days, and then continue to return him to this room initially when you're away and overnight. (If it is your bathroom, remember to close the toilet lid!)
- Many plants are poisonous to animals, so do a thorough check of your home before bringing your new cat home. Here is a list of some of the most common household plants that are toxic: Amaryllis, Azalea, Baby's Breath, Bird of Paradise, Calla Lilly, Cyclamen, Daffodil, Dieffenbachia, Easter Lily, Eucalyptus, Mistletoe, Narcissus, Oleander, Peace Lily, Primrose, Philodendron, Tiger Lily, and Tomato plant.
- Help reduce potential human allergies by getting a good HEPA air cleaner and vacuuming frequently.
- Remember, cats are naturally curious, like to explore and can get on top of most anything. It is a good idea to put away breakables that may be knocked off a shelf by an exploring kitty. It may be as easy as closing a door to a room.



## Supplies

**Litter box and Litter:** There are many different kinds of litter to choose from, but in studies, most cats prefer non-scented fine clumping litter.

**Food:** We recommend feeding a high-quality dry food supplemented with a small amount of canned food daily.

**Food and Water Dishes:** Avoid plastic dishes; they harbor bacteria. Make sure food and water dishes aren't placed near the litter box.

**Safety Collar and ID Tag:** Even indoor-only kitties should wear a collar and ID tag.

**Nail Clippers and Other Grooming Supplies:** A flea comb and a brush are needed to keep your cat's coat healthy. Hairball medication should be in your supply drawer if your cat has medium to long hair.

**Safe Toys:** Cats love to chase and hunt down toys. Avoid those with small parts that can break off and be ingested. Also avoid yarn, string, and curling ribbon as these will cause problems inside your cat's digestive tract if swallowed.

**Scratching Post:** Give your cat an appropriate place to do what comes naturally. Scratching not only helps kitty shed the sheath of his claws, but also marks territory. Try a post that will allow your cat to get a full stretch. Post materials vary—rope, carpet, wood—so find one your cat likes. Even declawed cats should have access to a scratching post to stretch, scent mark, and relieve stress.

# Settling In

## The Ride Home

Many cats do not like traveling. Here are some tips that will help your cat have a safe and calm time during the ride home.

Keep your new cat in his carrier no matter how much he is crying—it is the ONLY safe way to transport your pet. Have an adult carry the cat in its carrier to your vehicle to eliminate “swinging” of the carrier. Use a seat belt or tether to secure the carrier in your car.

Do not allow children to tease or excite the cat. Have them keep their hands and fingers to themselves! Never allow them to open the carrier to pet the cat.

Do not leave the cat in the car unattended, even for a short stop to shop. Cats can over-heat very quickly.

Keep the cat in the carrier until you are safely inside your home with the doors shut. Once home, the cat will need time and a quiet place to settle.

### What to Expect While Settling In

Do not be alarmed if your new cat exhibits any of the following behaviors in the first few days.

- Not eating
- Exploring
- Upset tummy, vomiting, loose stools
- Hiding (sometimes for days)
- Not using the litter box (See litter training)

## Things You Can Do to Help

**Be calm, be patient.** At first, keep your cat in a small room, such as the bathroom (make sure the toilet lid is down!), with the litter box at one end of the room and food and water and a bed at the other, to give him time to adjust.

Gradually give your pet more freedom as he successfully goes back to and uses his litter box. Allow several weeks for your new pet to adjust.

**Never drag your new cat out of hiding.** Use a lure such as food or a toy to encourage your cat to come out. Spend quiet time just sitting in the room to help the cat feel comfortable in your presence.

**Keep your cat indoors.** Check for open windows and loose screens, as a frightened cat could easily escape. It can take weeks or even months for your new cat to feel at home.

**Initially, keep your new cat separated from other pets.** (See introducing your new cat.) It is best not to introduce your kitten/cat to your home during very busy times such as birthdays and holidays. If you do, provide them with a quiet area away from the action and limit over-handling of the new cat. Cats get bored, so provide lots of fun toys, perches and social interactions with you to help your cat adjust. If you have a windowsill with a view of the yard, open the curtain or blinds so your cat can get a view of the world outside.

**Provide plenty of fresh water and high quality food.**

# The First Two Weeks

**Cats in Your Home?** Follow all of the tips on p.6 in addition to:

- Put the new cat in a separate room as soon as you get home.
- Let the cats sniff under the door and get used to the new scents.
- Give treats to the cats on either side of a closed door.
- Introduce your most friendly cat first.
- Do NOT allow one cat to attack another.
- Even if all seems well, separate when you're not at home to supervise.
- Do not force a meeting, and never restrain your cat (especially in your lap!).
- The slower you go, the better the outcome.

**Dogs in Your Home?** Follow all of the tips on p.6 in addition to:

- Allow the cat time to adjust in a cat-safe room for a few days.
- Let the dog and cat sniff each other under the door.
- Keep the dog leashed when he sees the cat, and give the dog tasty food treats (or his favorite reward) for sitting/lying calmly and staying relaxed in sight of the cat.
- Do not restrain the cat in your lap or arms; allow the cat freedom to move away if she needs to.
- Do not allow your dog to become aroused or excited with the new cat around. This can lead to chase/prey drive.
- Separate the new cat when left alone; put her in her "safe" room.

**Kids in Your Home?** Follow all the tips on p.7 in addition to:

- Supervise, supervise, supervise *every* interaction!
- Do not allow your children to be rough with the cat – instead, have them scratch the cat on its head only.
- Do not scratch a cat on its belly or pull its tail.
- It is best if children do not pick up the cat or squeeze too tightly.
- Do not let children crowd or corner the cat.
- Do not have visiting children until the cat has settled.
- Do not let the kids try to pull a cat out of hiding.
- Never let children chase a cat or grab for a running cat.
- Teach children to carefully LET GO if the cat struggles in their arms.

# Feeding

Your adult cat may be reluctant to eat the first couple of days in her new home as she adjusts. This is not unusual due to the stress associated with all the changes she has recently experienced.

## What to Feed

### Adult cats (8 months & older)

Adult cats should eat enough of a high-quality, nutritious food to meet their energy needs. The amount should be based on the cat's size and energy output.

- Feed two scheduled meals per day. Free feeding of high quality dry food may work, but can lead to obesity in some cats.
- We recommend dry food as the main base of the diet supplemented with a small amount of canned food twice daily to help assure the cat is getting enough moisture in his diet.
- Discard any food left after 24 hours before cleaning and refilling the dish. Follow amount guidelines on the pet food bag.
- Monitor your cat's weight and adjust food portions accordingly. If you cannot feel his ribs, he may be overweight, a condition that can lead to serious health problems. Check into pet food brands that have a low-cal option.

### Kittens (under 8 months)

Feed high quality, dry kitten food that is high in nutrients and low in magnesium ash (which may contribute to urinary disorders).

- Dry food helps to clean teeth and, if nutritionally complete, should be the bulk of the kitten's diet.
- Dry food can be left out free access so the kitten can eat when hungry.
- Supplement with a small amount of canned food twice daily, as much as the kitten can eat in 15 minutes.
- Limit canned fish.
- Fresh water should be available at all times in a spill proof, clean bowl.
- Do not give cow's milk as most cats are lactose-intolerant and may get diarrhea as a result.
- Report any changes in eating behavior to your veterinarian, as they could signal a medical problem. If your kitten loses weight rather than gains it, call your veterinarian immediately!

## Where to Feed

Place the cat's food and water dishes in a safe, quiet place, where she can eat without being disturbed by other pets, children or loud noises such as the laundry. The feeding place should be far from the litter box (which should have its own calm and quiet location).

Clean food and water dishes thoroughly every day.

# Safe Introductions

## To the Family Cat:

If your new cat is showing signs of illness, please do not introduce it to your existing cat until you consult with your veterinarian.

Make sure the new cat has a place to himself for at least a few days, allowing him time to adjust. Spend time with your new cat out of sight of your existing cat. Be sure to lavish attention on your existing cat as well.

Allow your original cat to follow his usual routine. He will be aware that something is different and will seek out the location of the new cat. Allow them to sniff under the door.

After a few days or so, swap the cats so they can investigate each other's areas. Getting used to each other's scents is an integral part of adjustment. If all seems to be going well, allow the cats to meet one another through a screen, baby gate, etc. It is normal for cats to hiss and growl at each other, but an all-out physical attack is very inappropriate and rare. However, be prepared with a water spray and a towel or blanket to separate the cats, as allowing them to fight will elongate the introduction period or may even damage the process altogether.

After a comfortable period of introductions through a barrier, or monitored encounter, increase the area and time the new kitty can explore outside his safe room. Allow only short periods of contact, increasing as time goes on.

Once the new cat has been allowed access to the rest of the house, leave his safe room intact so he may take refuge there. Improvement in attitudes toward each other should begin in a week or so. Do not be discouraged if it takes longer. The length of adjustment will depend on the personalities of the cats and the length of time your existing cat was a solitary pet. It may, though, take as long as a month or more for the new cat to be accepted.

Be sure to lavish attention on all your cats to make everyone feel part of the family. The social interaction level may vary; you may have cats that groom, play and sleep with each other, or just tolerate the existence of the other—and that is okay, too!

## To the Resident Dog:

First, prepare a safe room and have a clear escape route set for your new cat, as a precaution to the encounter. Make sure the dog does not have access to the cat's food and water and especially the litter box! Use a baby gate or cat door to block the dog's access.

When introducing your new cat to a dog, put your dog on a leash. Allow them to see each other (try to keep the leash loose) and then distract the dog with a treat or praise.

With a flat collar on the dog, you can let him drag the leash around the house so you can grab it if necessary. It is normal for the cat to hiss and growl at first, especially if she has not lived with a dog before. Cats take time to adjust to changes; the more the animals are together in the same room, with you to supervise, the quicker they will adjust. You can also throw a towel over the cat if she attacks the dog. Make sure the cat has an escape route or can leap to a high place. Do not let the dog chase and/or corner the cat or vice versa.

Separate them when you are not there to supervise until you are comfortable with the situation. Some dogs are too predatory to adjust safely to a cat. Proceed with caution and, if you find this is the case, never leave them together unsupervised.

If your cat hides, don't worry. Keep the well-behaved dog around as much as possible so the cat can get comfortable with his presence. Make sure the cat has a private place not accessible to the dog where she can eat and drink in peace and feel safe. Ensure that the cat has unthreatened access to her litter box at all times.

Allow the pets to adjust in their own time—be patient and act calm and relaxed. Often they become friends; sometimes they just tolerate each other. Either way you should respect the arrangement.

# Cats and Kids

**ALL INTERACTIONS BETWEEN CATS AND CHILDREN SHOULD BE CAREFULLY SUPERVISED**

**Here are some guidelines to help your children and your new cat live happily together:**

- Instruct children to be calm, quiet, and slow moving when being introduced to the cat.
- A kitten or cat should be picked up and held with one hand under its chest and the other hand supporting its hindquarters.
- Handle the cat gently and tell children not to squeeze or hold too tightly. Most children under the age of 5 cannot hold a cat properly without squeezing too tight.
- Young children should be taught to sit calmly while you place the cat in their laps. This way everyone is safe and happy.
- Children should leave the cat alone when he is sleeping, eating and using the litter box. Also, instruct youngsters not to put the cat in inappropriate places like the dryer, on the top bunk, in a closed box, etc.
- Cats should not be dragged out of hiding against their will.
- Children should not chase the cat around the house.
- If cornered and frightened, the cat may scratch and bite or may become timid.
- Never leave young children alone with a new pet.
- Teach children appropriate play and petting. Do not allow them to encourage the cat to bite them or run after them. The children should not BE the toys. Provide safe toys for both the cat and the kids.
- Teach children to look for signals that show their pet is getting irritated or over-stimulated. A swishing tail, ears back or gentle nips can lead to being scratched or bitten.
- Always allow the cat to escape if he tries to run. If the cat struggles to get away, let him go!
- Never allow rough handling, as this teaches the cat that it is OK to be rough in return!





# Keeping your Cat Indoors

Indoor cats lead healthier, longer lives. Keeping a cat indoors is not cruel. You can keep your cat happy by scheduling regular playtime, giving her toys to chase and catch and providing things for the cat to climb on (like a kitty condo). If you must let your cat outside, consider harness training your cat and taking her into your yard. While this can be done with patience, it is best to start harness training early, knowing that your cat may or may not accept the harness. Be aware that cats that are allowed outdoors, even on a harness, may be more likely to try to bolt out of open doors when the opportunity arises.

Here are some of the hazards that await a cat that roams freely outdoors:

- Becoming lost
- Being stolen
- Being killed by wildlife (even in the city!)
- Having fights with other cats, dogs, raccoons, etc.
- Being hit by a car
- Getting infectious diseases, feline leukemia, feline intestinal peritonitis, feline aids
- Getting fleas, ticks and worms
- Being exposed to the elements
- Neighbor complaints
- Ingesting antifreeze or poisons
- Deciding to take the offer of living INSIDE someone else's home

## Understanding Body Language

**Cats have a varied body language. Here are some ways to read your cat's more subtle language:**

**Eyes:** The pupils tell you a lot – watch for dilated wide pupils as this indicates fear and stress. Try to avoid petting or picking up a cat with widely dilated pupils!

**Ears:** Ears flattened and pressed onto the head are expressing fear or defense.

**Tail:** A cat holding his tail straight up is displaying confidence and pride. A bottlebrush tail is a sign of fear/stress. Then there is the slow wag of mild annoyance and finally the slow twitching of the tail indicating your cat has had enough!

**Purring:** While generally thought of as a sign of affection, purring can also indicate a serious problem. Injured cats may also purr just as much as if they are being affectionately petted. They may purr to comfort and reassure themselves when they are nervous or in pain.

# Cat Behavior

Cats need to scratch, play, hunt, hide, sleep and have social interaction. Cats are by nature curious and adventuresome. They can get into places you would not imagine and make toys out of the least likely items. Many cat behaviors are similar to those you would observe in wild felines (lions, tigers, cougars). They sleep, hunt, stalk, chase, scratch, bite and watch. Part of playing with your cat may include mock hunting: stalking, ambushing and pouncing. These can be delightful antics to watch, but be aware that anything that moves may become a target (including you).

## Scratching

Scratching is a normal behavior and can be directed to appropriate places. Your cat scratches not only to clean away scales from its nails but also to mark territory. Try providing your cat with a variety of scratching options such as a rope scratching post, a log with the bark intact, a cardboard box, etc.

Put the scratching post near a favorite sleeping place as cats love to stretch and scratch after a nap. Reinforce his good behavior by praising him whenever he uses appropriate places. Put catnip on the “right” scratching item. If you catch him scratching the furniture, try a water spray bottle, set on stream. Only punish the behavior, not the cat (that is, catch him in the act). If the cat just loves scratching one corner of your couch, for example, place something there to block access like plastic carpet protectors turned upside down with the little spikes facing outward to discourage cats from walking over them. You can also use foil or double-sided sticky tape.

## Declawing

Once people learn more about declawing, they are usually discouraged from having the surgery and are happy to seek out alternative solutions.

Consider the following:

- Declawing is the amputation of the entire last digit of the cat’s toes. Declawing includes severing of ligaments and tendons, which is very painful.
- Some cats may stop using their litter box after declawing as a result of associating the litter box with pain. Declawing can also cause impaired balance, increased stress because they cannot defend themselves, or injury during a fall because they cannot grip anything.
- It’s hardly surprising that, deprived of its claws, a cat may turn to its only other defense —its teeth. You may have a cat that does not damage your furniture but is now quick to bite!

### **Leave your cat with its claws and use the simple alternatives.**

- Keep claws trimmed—carefully trim the tips off the nails being careful not to cut the quick (the vein that runs down the nails). Ask your veterinarian to instruct you so you can do this at home or take your pet to a groomer. HHS staff will clip your cat's nails for a \$10 donation!
- You can buy nail sheaths, little plastic caps that fit over the nails to prevent scratching. These have been used successfully by many people.
- Train your cat to use the alternative scratching posts that you provided.

## Cat Behavior *continued*

### Playing

Buy, or make, a few cat toys. Playing and hunting desires can be closely related. A nice mouse toy can be used for a fun chase game, and allowing the cat to catch the toy mouse will help satisfy hunting desires. Most cats will play with anything that moves!

When you play, be sure to avoid wrestling or rough-housing with your hands. Otherwise, it teaches the cat that it's all right to use claws and teeth on you.

Avoid string, wool, curling ribbon (used for gift packages), or anything similar, as cats can ingest these substances and cause serious internal problems.

If you work all day, greet your cat affectionately when you arrive home and give him a few minutes of your undivided attention. Allow your pet to be with you in the evening. A brief play period and just being petted every evening will keep him happy. Set time aside for longer play periods. Many behavior issues are avoided by spending quality time with your cat.

### Sleeping and relaxing

Cats love high places to perch and look out from and cozy safe places to hide and sleep. You can buy “kitty condos” or leave suitable closets open. NOTE: always check that your cat is not inside before closing pretty much anything —especially the dryer!

Letting your cat sleep on your bed and relax on your lap will add pleasure and contentment to her life and yours! (Cats can sleep as much as 18 hours a day.)

Know that your bed time may not be the same as your cat's; they are largely nocturnal. Your cat's increased activity around the bedroom or house at some early morning hour is not a behavior problem, just instinctual. Playing with your cat prior to your bed time and feeding your cat when you go to bed may help her sleep peacefully at night.

### Biting

Some cats are gentle while others are rowdy with nipping/biting. Biting, even while playing, is natural, but should not be encouraged.

- You can avoid getting your hand bitten by not using your hand as a toy for your cat.
- Biting may also be saying that your cat has had enough petting or playing. So stop what you are doing and leave kitty alone.
- Stroking your cat near its tail and on the belly may also elicit biting behavior. Avoid petting in that area as biting is a natural reaction to that stimulation.
- You can retrain kitty by playing gently and using interactive toys such as feather wands and boas.
- If your cat tries to bite, remove all attention so as not to inadvertently reward inappropriate behavior.

# Litter Box Training

The general rule of thumb is one litter box per cat plus an extra box for insurance. The litter box should be easily accessible to your cat at all times.

Here are some tips that will help ensure that your cat uses its litter box:

- If you adopted a kitten, it is important to have a litter box on every floor level the kitten will have access to. If a kitten has a long way to navigate to a litter box, he may stop en route and find a more convenient spot, such as behind your couch!
- Select a type of litter box that is well-suited for your cat. Choose a litter box that your cat can easily turn around in, and that she can easily get in and out of.
- Covered litter boxes are not recommended as they trap odors and may be unpleasant for your cat.
- Place the litter box in a convenient location, but it must be private and quiet for the cat (a laundry room or hallway may be too noisy and busy).
- Keep the boxes away from heavy traffic areas and the cat's feeding area. Be certain a shy cat can access the box without feeling threatened or exposed.
- Scoop away waste every day. Cats are more likely to consistently use a litter box that is kept clean. Thoroughly clean the box once a month. Empty out all the litter, wash with dish soap and dry.
- When you first arrive home with your new cat, calmly place her in the litter box a few times to be sure she knows the location. Allowing the cat to watch you when you scoop the litter box has been reported to encourage the cat to jump in and use it.
- You may need to experiment with different types of litter until you find the one that is acceptable to your cat.
- Any accidents should be cleaned with an enzyme-based cleaner.



## Why Is My Cat Not Using The Litterbox?

You need to determine if the problem is inappropriate elimination or territorial marking. If your cat is marking, you will usually find the urine has been deposited on vertical surfaces, whereas inappropriate toileting is on horizontal surfaces. Each has different suggested remedies:

- For territorial marking (spraying), look into what has changed in your cat's environment that may cause him or her to feel the need to assert a presence in an area.
- The cat may have a physiological or physical condition (illness). Any cat displaying inappropriate litter box habits should see your veterinarian right away to rule out infection or other medical issues.
- Possible reasons for inappropriate elimination: The cat has not learned the location of the litter box or forgets where it is if allowed too much house to roam. This is especially true for kittens.
- The cat may not like the brand of litter, so try some others simultaneously. Observe which one he selects.
- The litter box is not clean. Soiled areas should be removed DAILY. The entire pan should be emptied and washed at least once a month, replacing with fresh litter.
- The litter box has been disinfected with a strong smelling solution and needs to be rinsed thoroughly. Cats do not like strong smells.
- The cat is soiling an area previously used for elimination by another pet. Clean thoroughly with an enzyme-based cleaner.
- Place the food bowl on a previously soiled spot as this may deter the cat, or place another litter box on the spot.
- The location of the litter box may be unacceptable; try a new quiet area.
- Another pet may be keeping the cat away.
- Another cat is using the litter box. Some cats will not share a litter box, especially at first.
- A child or pet is bothering the new cat while you are not there, causing fear-related elimination or the cat simply may be responding to stress and family and household changes.

### **Be Patient and Consistent.**

It can take a few weeks for a cat to settle—not much to ask for a new lifelong friend and companion. NEVER punish the cat for making a mistake. This may make the problem much worse. Patience and praise work far more quickly to solve any problems.

Remember to call our **Behavior Helpline at (630)323-5637** for pet behavior advice.

# Health Concerns and Medical Treatment

## Feline upper respiratory Infections

Your cat may have a cold when you get him home. Cats are subject to an airborne virus disease that is very similar to the common cold experienced by humans. It is called URI (Upper Respiratory Infection), and is a common occurrence in an animal shelter. We do all we can to prevent its spread, including carefully disinfecting our cages and vaccinating each cat. Despite our best efforts, some cats will come down with URI. When multiple cats are confined to one room, a single sneeze from a cat can expose all the others, just like a cold is spread through a classroom. Also, all the cats in the shelter are under stress just by virtue of being here, which lowers their resistance to illness.

If your cat begins to sneeze or has a runny nose or eyes within 7 days after you get him/her home, chances are that the cat has come down with URI. The virus is quite contagious to other cats, so if you have any resident cats, keep them separate. You can expect symptoms to continue for 7-10 days and they may vary in intensity (just like a cold!). The cat may sneeze, have discharge from eyes and nose, drool and breathe with difficulty through his or her mouth. The cat may lose its appetite and even stop drinking. If the discharge from your cat's eyes and nose is watery and the cat's temperature is normal, you are dealing with "simple" URI virus. Mucous and fever are indicators that a secondary bacterial infection is complicating the picture. **With these conditions the cat most likely will need antibiotics. It is imperative that you seek veterinary treatment for the cat exhibiting any signs of a URI as soon as possible.** Kittens with underdeveloped immune systems are especially vulnerable to contracting URI's. With rest, care and veterinary intervention, many cats will recover from mild URI in one or two weeks.

### Can my other pets get URI?

URI is contagious to other cats. Vaccinating against URI is not 100% effective, so it is a good idea to isolate cats that are showing signs of URI, and wash hands after handling sick cats. We recommend isolating all new arrivals in your household for 8-10 days after adoption to give them a chance to settle in and make sure they are not coming down with anything. URI is not contagious to people or to animals other than cats.

### What should I do if my new cat has a URI?

- Provide your cat with a quiet, warm place to rest.
- Make sure the cat is eating. Sometimes with a stuffy nose they can't smell their food very well and may not want to eat. Offer smelly wet food to increase their appetite.
- If the cat is congested, use a humidifier or put the cat in the bathroom and run hot water in the shower for a few minutes a couple of times a day.
- If any medicine has been prescribed, be sure to give the full course as directed, even if the symptoms seem to have gone away.

### What are signs of URI?

- Sneezing
- Runny nose
- Red/runny eyes
- Fever
- Sores on tongue/lips/nose
- Lack of appetite
- Decreased energy

## Health Concerns and Medical Treatment (continued)

### When should I contact my veterinarian?

If your cat has any of the following symptoms, contact your veterinarian immediately:

- Not eating for more than 48 hours (adults). Kittens - 24 hours.
- Green or yellow discharge from the nose or eyes.
- Difficulty breathing, especially panting or breathing with an open mouth.
- Depressed, lethargic or unresponsive.
- Vomiting or diarrhea that lasts more than 24 hours.
- Little or no response to prescribed care after several days.

### Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV)

FeLV is a virus that causes a breakdown in a cat's immune system. This, in turn, causes the cat to become susceptible to many other diseases which a healthy cat might otherwise be able to fight off. HHS tests all cats 6 months of age and older for FeLV. We highly recommend all kittens under 6 months of age be tested for FeLV by your veterinarian after adoption. If you have other cats, they should be kept separated from your new cat until FeLV testing has been done.

FeLV vaccines are reasonably effective in preventing persistent FeLV infection should your cat be exposed to the virus. No vaccine is 100% effective. The immune response produced by these vaccines will protect most cats from becoming infected with the virus. Consult your veterinarian regarding sufficient inoculations for your new cat or kitten.

### Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)

Cats infected with feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) may not show symptoms until years after the initial infection occurred. Although the virus is slow-acting, a cat's immune system is severely weakened once the disease takes hold. This makes the cat susceptible to various secondary infections. Infected cats receiving supportive medical care and kept in a stress-free, indoor environment can live relatively comfortable lives for months to years before the disease reaches its chronic stages.

### Feline Infectious Peritonitis

Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP) is a disease that fortunately most cat owners will never need to know about first hand. It affects about one in 100 cats—most under the age of two.

The underlying cause of Feline Infectious Peritonitis is a type of coronavirus. This virus is very common in the feline population, and studies show that in most shelters and multi-cat environments 80-100% of cats have been exposed to this virus at some point. Most of these cats (about 99% of them) will never be sick from the virus. In a small portion (about 1%) of cats, however, the virus will be able to mutate into the form known as Feline Infectious Peritonitis. There is no test currently available that will allow one to determine which cats are going to be able to mutate the virus.



## Health Concerns and Medical Treatment (continued)

### Feline Infectious Peritonitis, continued

Cats that do mutate the virus become very sick. They commonly have fevers that are not responsive to antibiotics, and many of them accumulate fluid in their abdomen or chest. In the “dry” form, they can have eye inflammations (uveitis), kidney or liver disease, or neurological problems.

There is no good test to determine if a cat has the disease, although if a kitten has fluid in his chest or abdomen, there is a high likelihood that FIP is the cause. There is no treatment for the disease, and it is almost always fatal. Vaccination has not proven effective against the disease, and most cats are exposed to the coronavirus before they are 16 weeks old (the youngest that a cat can be vaccinated with this specific vaccine). The risk of contracting FIP is highest in kittens in the first year of life, and becomes very low after two years of age.

If your kitten shows any sign of illness, please take him to a veterinarian, who can provide more information about this devastating disease.

### Ringworm

Although the name suggests otherwise, ringworm isn't caused by a worm at all—but a fungus that can infect the skin, hair and nails. Not uncommon in cats, this highly contagious disease can lead to patchy, circular areas of hair loss with central red rings. Also known as dermatophytosis, ringworm often spreads to other pets in the household—and to humans, too.

Classic symptoms of ringworm in cats include:

- Skin lesions that typically appear on the head, ears and forelimbs.
- Ringworm can cause flaky bald patches that sometimes look red in the center.
- In mild cases, there may be localized areas of redness or simply dandruff, while more severe infections can spread over a cat's entire body.
- It's also possible for a pet to carry ringworm spores and not show any symptoms whatsoever.

#### Ringworm Transmission

- A cat can get ringworm directly through contact with an infected animal—or indirectly through contact with bedding, dishes and other materials that have been contaminated with the skin cells or hairs of infected animals. Ringworm spores are notoriously hardy and can survive in the environment for more than a year!
- Any cat can develop ringworm, but kittens less than a year old and geriatric cats are most prone to infection.
- Long-haired cats and those who are immunocompromised are also more susceptible.
- Ringworm is highly contagious and can spread quickly in crowded environments.
- Warm and humid conditions tend to promote ringworm infections.

Because infection can potentially spread over a cat's body, it is important if you suspect your cat may have ringworm that you see your vet for an accurate diagnosis. And because the infection can easily spread to you and other animals in the household, it's a smart idea to immediately quarantine your cat until a veterinarian can confirm a diagnosis. You should also thoroughly wash your hands after you touch your cat.



## Preventative Health Care

We highly recommend that you bring your new cat to the veterinarian of your choosing within one week for an overall health exam. Puppies and kittens may require further vaccinations as they mature. *You should receive your cat's rabies vaccine/certificate within 2-4 weeks of adoption.* While at Hinsdale Humane Society, the cat you adopted received the following preventative health care procedures:

**FVRCP** This is a standard vaccine administered to cats. It is sometimes referred to as the Distemper vaccine but it also includes Rhinotracheitis and Calici virus. Kittens and some cats may need additional doses administered by your veterinarian over a period of weeks to achieve maximum immunity from diseases. Until these are complete, it is best to limit the exposure of your kitten to other cats until you are certain your new cat is healthy. Many serious cat illnesses are spread through sneezing and nose touching with other cats. While at the shelter, all cats and kittens receive initial vaccines at admission to help ensure they receive maximum protection against illness and disease. Upon adoption, follow your veterinarian's advice regarding a vaccination booster schedule for your cat or kitten.

**DE-WORMING** A dose of medicine to help eliminate common intestinal parasites was given. Do not be surprised to see worms passed in your cat's elimination. This is to be expected. Continued treatment and other types of parasite control may be needed and can be provided by your veterinarian depending on your cat's individual needs.

**FLEA/EAR MITE TREATMENT** Many products exist that protect your cat from fleas and other parasites. If applicable, your cat received treatment for fleas and/or ear mites. Ask your veterinarian for information about different approaches for continued parasite control.

**MICROCHIP** Your pet has been microchipped. HHS registers your basic information with **24 Hour Pet Watch**. We highly recommend you contact them by calling 1(866)597-2424 to ensure all necessary information is included and correct.

**SPAYING/NEUTERING** If your cat or kitten was altered recently, be sure to monitor the surgery site carefully for signs of swelling, redness or discharge, and contact your veterinarian with any questions or concerns.

**GROOMING** Long-hair cats require ongoing grooming; it is necessary for their health and well-being. Grooming is not just for looks; it prevents painful mats and allows the skin to breathe.

Neglecting this type of care can constitute neglect and causes needless suffering. If you are not able to accommodate your cat's grooming needs yourself, we will be able to refer you to a good groomer.

## Conclusion

### When the match isn't right...

Sometimes a relationship is not successful. If keeping your companion animal becomes impossible, please notify Hinsdale Humane Society of plans for placement or make an appointment at 630-323-5630 to return the animal to the shelter.

Animals in our lives provide a blessing and an opportunity to share the world with another species. It is a responsibility to take seriously.

"Working through" behavior and medical issues will deepen your relationship with your animals and provide a valuable lesson to children and adults that the bond is indeed one that will endure tough times and last for the lifetime of your pet. "Getting rid" of an animal because it does not meet expectations, has not been taught good manners, or needs expensive medical care is a poor example of animal ownership.

All of us at Hinsdale Humane Society want to be sure you made the right pet choice and to keep the loving bond for the lifetime of the pet. Please call our **Behavior Helpline** at 630-323-5637 with any questions you may have; we are glad to assist!

The Hinsdale Humane Society is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to the care and adoption of homeless animals.

We advocate education and public service to encourage the compassionate treatment of animals and to prevent their suffering and neglect.

We are a voice for companion animals who are dependent on people for their care and believe they are entitled to our respect and protection.



*Celebrating* pets and  
the people who love them.

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[www.hinsdalehumanesociety.org](http://www.hinsdalehumanesociety.org)