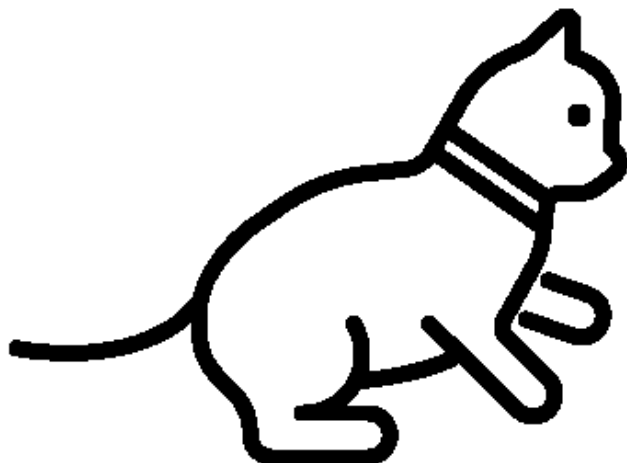




---

# Tally Oaks

Veterinary Wellness Center  
KittenHandbook



# Table of Contents

Welcome Letter and Mission Statement.....	1
General Information and After-Hours Care.....	2
Preventive Care.....	3
Lifetime Schedule for Feline Wellness.....	4
Feline Health Record.....	5
Immunizations.....	6
Feline Parasites.....	8
Flea and Tick Prevention.....	11
Feline Heartworm Disease and Prevention.....	12
Nutrition.....	13
Dental Care.....	15
Spay/Neuter/Microchip.....	16
New Kitten Advice.....	18
Your Mature Pet.....	20
Pet Insurance.....	21





**WELCOME!** To Tally Oaks Veterinary Wellness Center, we are happy that you have chosen to follow an integrative veterinary care path that combines conventional and holistic medicine to provide your pet with a longer, and healthier life.

**Veterinary Wellness Center** At Tally Oaks Veterinary Wellness Center, we combine holistic and conventional medical care by first reviewing your pets history, diet, lifestyle, and completing a comprehensive examination to determine the best forms of therapy that is personally suited to your pet.

We at Tally Oaks are proud to offer Fear Free Handling. The Fear Free initiative is a nationally recognized movement that seeks to eliminate fear from veterinary visits through educating both veterinary professionals and pet owners about Fear Free techniques. It is through having Fear Free certified personnel that we are able to make your pet’s healthcare more elevated by helping prevent and alleviate fear, anxiety, and stress throughout your pet’s visits. Not only does being Fear Free help your pet relax, it also helps provide more accurate diagnostic results for testing that has the potential to be altered with a patient that is stressed.

Services we provide at Tally Oaks Veterinary Wellness Center include:

Conventional	Holistic
Dentistry	Acupuncture
Digital Radiographs	Assisi Loop
Ultrasonography	Essential Oils
Internal Medicine	Laser Therapy
Ophthalmology	Nutritional Therapy
Preventative Care	
Senior Care	

Our integrative veterinary care path will begin together as Dr. Woerner will perform a full examination, answer any questions you have, and will discuss personalized treatment plans for your pet. We deeply care about all of our clients and their pets, we look forward to guiding you and your pet through a wellness plan that will take them into their senior years.

Thank you for joining the Tally Oaks Veterinary Wellness Center Team!

## MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to provide you with the highest level of integrative veterinary medicine in a relaxed and caring atmosphere for both you and your pet. Your pet’s health and overall well-being is our top priority. Our pets provide so much happiness and stress relief for us, it’s time we think about doing the same for them!



## GENERAL INFORMATION

Office Address: 19302 Silcott Springs Road  
Purcellville, VA 20132

Phone Number: (540) 338-7081

Email: [drtaniawoerner@gmail.com](mailto:drtaniawoerner@gmail.com)

Office Hours:           Monday 8:30AM – 5:00PM  
                                  Tuesday 8:30AM – 5:00PM  
                                  Wednesday 8:30AM – 8:00PM  
                                  Thursday 8:30AM – 5:00PM  
                                  Friday 8:30AM – 5:00PM  
                                  Saturday – Appointments upon request  
                                  Sunday – Closed

\*If your pet is in need of emergency care during normal business hours, please call ahead to make sure we are in the office and to make us aware of your arrival.

Tally Oaks Veterinary Wellness Center is not staffed 24 hours, if after hours care is necessary, we may have to transfer to an emergency care facility.

## AFTER HOURS EMERGENCIES

### Valley Vet Emergency Service

210 Costello Drive  
Winchester, VA 22602  
(540) 662-7811

### The Life Centre-Animal Emergency Hospital and Referral Center

165 Fort Evans Road NE  
Leesburg, VA  
(703) 777-5755

### 24-Hour ASPCA Pet Poison Hotline

1-888-426-4435 \*There is a \$70 fee for consultation with board certified toxicologists along with the most up to date and complete information on toxicities.

# PREVENTIVE CARE

Prevention is the key to your pet's long-term health, as well as minimizing the lifetime cost of care. Routine wellness exams, vaccinations, yearly lab work, deworming and fecal checks, as well as medications to prevent heartworm, fleas, ticks, and intestinal parasites are necessary to protect your pet. We carry conventional, as well as natural alternatives for flea/tick products.

Preventive care is tailored to your pet's age, lifestyle, risk factors, and other elements that can help prevent common diseases or detect them at early, and easily treatable stages. This approach helps to offer your pet an extended period of vitality and good health.

Immunizations are one of the best tools we have in preventive veterinary medicine. The key to using vaccines appropriately is to determine which diseases your pet may be at risk for and then vaccinate for those diseases and no more than necessary. Due to advances in veterinary immunology, diseases that were once relatively common and fatal to pets are now easily preventable.

## Kitten Care

We recommend taking steps to prepare your pet for his or her first visits to avoid having a negative experience. Some tips that will help your kitten experience less stress, and be confident when visiting our clinic include; looking in their ears often at home, rolling them on their back, touching their feet, looking at their nails, holding their toes, hug them, and pick them up.

Throughout kittenhood during your visits, and included in this book, we will discuss diet, housetraining, behavior, when to spay or neuter, microchipping, individualized vaccine protocols for your kitten, intestinal parasites, and monthly preventatives.

The schedule for kittens appears to be a little busy; however, it is very important that kitten visits, vaccines, and deworming are completed at recommended intervals or they can be susceptible to detrimental diseases and parasites.

Starting when the kitten is 2 weeks of age, they need to be dewormed for the first time, then dewormed every 2 weeks until they are 10-12 weeks of age. It is important to have their stool checked during their veterinary visits to allow for the correct choice of a dewormer. When they are 6-8 weeks of age, they will get the first of their feline distemper vaccines. These are repeated every 2-4 weeks until there are 14-16 weeks of age.

Rabies vaccines must be administered between the age of 3 and 4 months and a booster is given in one year, after which rabies is given every 3 years.

Another vaccine for Feline Leukemia, will be administered to your kitten based on their lifestyle. Tally Oaks will discuss whether this vaccine is recommended for your kitten.

# LIFETIME SCHEDULE FOR FELINE WELLNESS

## 6-9 Weeks

Comprehensive Examination  
Weight and Body Condition Scoring  
Intestinal Parasite Screen  
Deworming  
1<sup>st</sup>FVRCP Vaccination  
Nutritional Assessment  
Discuss Flea/Tick Prevention (start holistically)

## 10-13 Weeks

Brief Examination  
Weight and Body Condition Scoring  
Deworming  
2<sup>nd</sup>FVRCP Vaccination  
\*1<sup>st</sup>FeLV Vaccination  
Heartworm & Flea/Tick Prevention

## 14-17 Weeks

Brief Examination  
Weight and Body Condition Scoring  
Intestinal Parasite Screen  
Deworming (if needed)  
3<sup>rd</sup>FVRCP Vaccination (1 year)  
Rabies Vaccination (1 year)  
\*2<sup>nd</sup>FeLV Vaccination  
Dental Care  
Heartworm & Flea/Tick Prevention

## 4-6 Months

Pre-Anesthetic Bloodwork  
Spay or Neuter / Microchip  
Heartworm/Intestinal Parasite Prevention  
Dental Care

## 1-6 Years

Annual Comprehensive Examination  
Nutritional Assessment  
Body Condition Scoring  
Intestinal Parasite Screening  
HW / FeLV / FIV Testing  
FVRCP Vaccination (3 years)  
Rabies Vaccination (3 years)  
\*FeLV Vaccination  
Monthly HW/Intestinal Parasite Prevention  
Monthly Flea/Tick Prevention  
Bloodwork/Urinalysis As Needed  
Dental Assessment/Cleaning As Needed

## 7+ Years

Bi-Annual Comprehensive Examination  
Nutritional Assessment  
Body Condition Scoring  
Intestinal Parasite Screening  
HW / FeLV / FIV Testing  
Annual Geriatric Blood Profile  
FVRCP Vaccination (3 years)  
Rabies Vaccination (3 years)  
\*FeLV Vaccination  
Monthly HW/Intestinal Parasite Prevention  
Monthly Flea/Tick Prevention  
Dental Assessment/Cleaning As Needed  
Possible Recommendations based on cat's age/breed/lifestyle:

Blood Pressure  
Electrocardiogram  
Eye Pressure Test  
AFAST/TFAST Ultrasonography

\* Vaccinations that are dependent on cat's lifestyle

Once cats reach 7+ years of age they are considered seniors, 1 human year is equal to roughly 7 cat years. Regular visits to Tally Oaks will not only help to prevent diseases, but if your dog does become ill, we will be able to help your dog quicker and more accurately by continuing to develop a comprehensive history.

# FELINE HEALTH RECORD

Age	Date	Deworming	FVRCP Vaccine	FelV Vaccine	Rabies / tag #	HW FeLV/FIV Testing	Intestinal Parasite Screen (Fecal test)	Weight
weeks								
weeks								
weeks								
weeks								
weeks								
weeks								
weeks								
1 year								
2 years								
3 years								
4 years								
5 years								
6 years								
7 years								
8 years								
9 years								
10 years								
11 years								
12 years								
13 years								
14 years								
15 years								
16 years								
17 years								
18 years								
19 years								
20 years								



# IMMUNIZATIONS

Immunizations are one of the best tools we have in preventive veterinary medicine. The key to using vaccines appropriately is to determine which diseases your pet may be at risk for and then vaccinate for those disease and no more than necessary. Due to advances in veterinary immunology, diseases that were once relatively common and fatal to pets are not easily preventable.

Our balanced approach to vaccines is the best way to protect your pet from disease and minimize the risk of an adverse reaction to a vaccine.

## Rabies

Rabies is a deadly viral disease that affects all warm-blooded mammals including dogs, cats, wildlife, and humans. The disease affects the central nervous system which is typically shown through behavioral changes such as anxiousness, aggressive behavior, or lack of fear/being more friendly than normal. As the disease progresses animals develop hypersensitivity to light and sound and may have seizures and/or become extremely fractious. Final stage of rabies is characterized by the paralysis of nerves that control the head/throat, causing the animal to hypersalivate and lose the ability to swallow. This leads to respiratory failure and death. Rabies vaccination of cats is required by law in Virginia. Rabies is transmitted through bite wounds, often from infected wildlife.

## The FVRCP Vaccination covers Panleukopenia and Feline Respiratory Diseases:

### Panleukopenia

Feline Panleukopenia, also known as Feline Distemper, is a highly contagious, often fatal disease in cats. The disease is caused by a parvovirus and is transmitted by contact with infected cats. Infected cats shed the virus through their feces, or environmental contamination. The virus is highly resistant and therefore capable of surviving in the environment for months. Kittens without prior vaccination or exposure are the most susceptible. Signs of infection are fever, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, abdominal pain, tremors, and incoordination.

### Feline Respiratory Disease – Rhinotracheitis-Herpesvirus (FVR), Calcivirus (FCV), and Chlamydia

The majority of feline upper respiratory diseases result in similar symptoms of nasal and ocular discharge, conjunctivitis, ulcers of the mouth, loss of appetite, and depression. These diseases are all highly contagious and spread rapidly. Healthy cats are usually able to recover in 1-2 weeks, however it is important to note that cats infected with FVR tend to become persistently infected after returning to normal and continue to shed the virus during periods of stress. Furthermore, FVR can result in abortion of infected fetuses. Kittens without prior vaccination or exposure are at greatest risk for FVR and FCV, and are highly susceptible to infection. Chlamydia on the other hand, is a bacteria and is a less common cause of feline respiratory disease.



# IMMUNIZATIONS

## Leukemia

Feline Leukemia is a high mortality disease that is caused by the Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV). Feline Leukemia produces an initial immunosuppressive infection, which in turn make cats more susceptible to various other diseases such as respiratory disease, diarrhea, anemia, etc. Cats that survive these initial diseases may then develop some form of cancer, hence Feline Leukemia. The disease is transmitted by close contact with infected cats, generally through saliva, so grooming and/or bite wounds are the most common forms of transmission.

There are several vaccination programs available for your kitten or cat. The type and frequency of vaccinations are based on their age, lifestyle, and risk of exposure to infectious diseases. At Tally Oaks, we will discuss these factors with you, and make a vaccination plan that best suits your cat's needs.

# FELINE PARASITES

## INTERNAL PARASITES

Almost all kittens start life with intestinal worms, usually roundworms and hookworms which are passed from their mothers. The larvae of roundworms, hookworms, and whipworms are commonly found in our yards, fields, and gardens. Although rare, roundworm and hookworm parasites can pass to people.

Contamination with a protozoal parasite called coccidia is very common in shelter, breeding kennel, and/or cat rescue environments. Another protozoal parasite, giardia, is common in moist areas and unfiltered water sources.

Heartworm larvae, or microfilariae, are introduced to a dog's bloodstream by the bite of a mosquito.

## INTESTINAL PARASITES

Intestinal parasites are most common in kittens and puppies but can infect cats and dogs of any age. The most common types of intestinal parasites are roundworms and hookworms. Kittens and puppies can become infected with parasites before they are born (transplacental transmission) or through their mother's milk immediately after being whelped. If untreated, kittens will continue to reinfect themselves.

Adult cats and dogs become infected with roundworms and hookworms through contaminated feces in the environment. Once a cat or dog is infected, they too will pass intestinal parasite eggs through their feces.

### Roundworms:

- Adults are round, white, and 2-4 inches long. They resemble spaghetti
- Can either be coughed up, vomited, or passed in the feces
- When present in large numbers, can cause intestinal blockage
- Infected pets can present with a "pot-bellied" appearance
- Incubation period is 7-14 days
- Have the potential to infect people

### Hookworms:

- Adult worms are very thin and almost transparent
- They measure about ¼ - ½ inch long and are normally not visible to the naked eye
- Hookworms attach to the intestines with hook-like mouthparts which lead to blood loss and anemia
- Can cause bloody diarrhea, weight loss, and death when severe
- Incubation period of 3 weeks to several months
- Have the potential to infect people

# INTESTINAL PARASITES

## Roundworm and Hookworm Infection in People:

Humans can become infected with roundworm and hookworm through direct contact with infected feces. Typically, humans are exposed through handling or accidental ingestion of contaminated soil, sand, or plant life. Children are more susceptible than adults due to the increased exposure risk of playing in the soil barefoot and/or putting dirty objects into their mouths.

In humans, roundworms can cause ocular and visceral larva migrans. This occurs when roundworm eggs are ingested and then hatch into larvae. These larvae then travel through the liver, lungs, and other organs in the body. The migration of roundworm larvae can cause permanent nerve damage, eye damage, or even blindness.

Hookworms can cause cutaneous (skin) larval migrans in humans. This occurs when hookworm larvae move into and within the skin which causes redness and inflammation in affected areas. Some larvae are capable of penetrating deep into the tissue and cause damage to the intestines and other internal organs.

## Whipworms:

- Live in the large intestine and cecum of the dog
- Not visible to the naked eye
- Cause chronic diarrhea, bloody stool, generalized poor health
- Infection occurs through ingestion of eggs in contaminated soil/ground and can survive in the environment for several years
- Lifecycle lasts 90 days, therefore several treatments are necessary to eliminate an infection

## Tapeworms:

- Tapeworms shed in segments into fecal material
  - Segments are about ¼ inch long and flat, and resemble a grain of rice or sesame seed
- Can cause poor hair coat, dry skin, weight loss, and gastrointestinal upset
- They can be seen on fur, around the rectum, and/or in recently passed stool
- Fleas are the most common vector for tapeworm eggs
  - Cats that are infested with fleas become infected with tapeworms when they chew or lick their skin/fur
- Some types of tapeworms can also be carried by rodents
- Humans can become infected with tapeworms if they incidentally swallow a flea – this is rare, and is mostly seen in children

## INTESTINAL PARASITES

### Coccidia:

- Protozoan that lives in the gastrointestinal tract of cats and dogs
- Cause diarrhea in puppies and kittens
- Become infected through exposure to infective cysts in feces
- Infected puppies/kittens are contagious to others, however this species cannot infect humans

### Giardia:

- Parasite that lives in the intestine and is passed through feces
- Microscopic and is not visible to the naked eye
- Can survive outside of the body and in the environment for many months due to a protective shell
- Animals and humans become infected by swallowing contaminated water, eating contaminated uncooked food, or having contact with someone who has giardiasis
- Symptoms of a giardia infection include diarrhea, greasy stool, stomach and/or abdominal cramping, and vomiting.
  - These symptoms can lead to weight loss and dehydration
- Giardia can be spread to humans

### How do I prevent and/or treat parasite infections in my pet?

- It is recommended to check a stool sample annually
  - Due to intermittent egg shedding and variety in the quality of sample checked, a “negative” or “no parasites identified” does not guarantee that your pet is worm free
- If your pet has a fecal test that is positive for specific parasites, appropriate dewormers should be administered and repeated as dictated by the parasite’s life cycle.
- Year-round monthly preventative medications are recommended
  - Common parasite prevention is usually combined with monthly heartworm preventative
  - Monthly flea/tick prevention is imperative in preventing tapeworm infections as fleas are a vector for tapeworms
- Play areas, lawns, and gardens at home should be kept free of feces
- Learn to recognize and avoid possible contaminated soil, sand, plants, water, and other sources of parasite exposure. Always wash your hands well after working outside, playing outside, or handling your pet or the pets of others, especially before eating.
- Do not allow your pet to hunt and eat rodents or rabbits
- Puppies and kittens should be dewormed starting at 2 weeks of age through 16 weeks of age.
  - If you acquire your puppy or kitten after weaning, it should be dewormed at least 3 times at 2 week intervals, usually during the course of their puppy or kitten vaccine series

# FLEA AND TICK PREVENTION

## Fleas

One female flea can lay up to 2000 eggs in her lifetime which is why even a small number of fleas can quickly turn into a severe flea infestation. The flea lifecycle occurs in four stages: egg, larval, pupae, and adult. The adult portion of the flea population that is visible only accounts for 5% of the total population. Fleas have the potential to cause health problems such as tapeworms, skin infections, and anemia. For pets that are allergic to fleas, it can only take one flea to cause intense itching, leading to your pet chewing out their hair and traumatizing their skin. Additionally, fleas can carry several zoonotic diseases.

In Virginia, the highest number of fleas and the greatest risk for infestation of you and your pet is during late fall (November and December), prior to sustained freezing weather.

## Ticks

One female tick can lay up to 3000 eggs in her lifetime. The development of one egg takes up to two years and requires three different hosts for food. All ticks have four stages to their life cycle: egg, larvae (seed tick), nymph, and adult. Ticks require a blood meal to progress to each successive stage in their life cycle (with exception of the eggs). Ticks can cause severe itching, skin irritation, and can transmit serious diseases such as Lyme Disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Ehrlichiosis, and Anaplasmosis, among others. Tick borne diseases are growing at an alarming rate in Virginia, so it is best to protect your pet year-round.

## Flea and Tick Prevention

At Tally Oaks, we recommend using Revolution Plus. Revolution Plus prevents heartworm, intestinal parasites, ear mites, and fleas/ticks with a monthly, topical administration. In two clinical studies, one dose of Revolution Plus killed 100% of adult fleas for a full 5 weeks, and started killing fleas within 6 hours of re-infestations. Revolution Plus kills three types of ticks, black legged ticks (deer ticks), American dog ticks, and Gulf Coast ticks. Effective results sustained for up to 5 weeks for black-legged and American dog ticks.

# FELINE HEARTWORM DISEASE AND PREVENTION

Heartworm disease is a serious and potentially fatal disease. The life cycle of heartworms involves the mosquito as a vector. The route of transmission of heartworms to dogs are as follows:

1. A mosquito bites a dog that is infested with heartworms and ingests microfilaria (young heartworms).
2. The microfilariae develop into infective larva while in the mosquito.
3. The infected mosquito then bites a cat, transmitting the infective larval stage
4. Larvae continue to mature as they migrate through the cat's tissues, eventually reaching the heart and lungs

Since cats are not the natural host for heartworms (dogs and related species are the natural host), cats are much more sensitive to infections. The presence of just one worm may result in permanent lung damage (known as heartworm-associated respiratory disease or HARD) or even death to a cat or kitten. Cat lungs tend to be highly reactive to the presence of heartworms, and the subsequent inflammation of the lung tissue is what causes the cat to become sick.

Unlike in dogs, feline heartworm disease can be difficult to diagnose. There is no reliable blood test that is consistently accurate. Sign of heartworm disease in cats can include coughing, vomiting, difficulty breathing, and lethargy. It is not thought that many cats who suffer from "feline asthma" actually have heartworm disease. There is no safe approved treatment for heartworm infection in cats. Once infected, the cat will remain infected until the worm dies naturally, which is the time of greatest risk to the cat. The reaction the cat's lungs experience from the dying worm can be fatal. Unfortunately, sudden death may be the first and only sign of heartworm infection in some cats.

Because of the potential for severe symptoms if infected by heartworms, we recommend that all cats, indoor and outdoor, be on some form of monthly heartworm preventative.

At Tally Oaks, we recommend Revolution Plus for heartworm prevention in cats. It is a topical medication administered monthly. In two clinical studies, Revolution Plus was 100% effective in preventing heartworm disease.

# NUTRITION

Nutrition is the foundation of your dog's health. Without good nutrition, good health is very difficult to attain. At Tally Oaks, it is our goal to have our pets thriving, not just surviving.

When choosing a cat food, it is important to select good quality proteins. Proteins should be from meat sources. Foods containing soy, gluten, or other grain-based proteins are not optimal nutrition. Higher-quality foods and fresh foods tend to have higher protein levels. In general, foods with meat by-products or meat meal should be avoided. However, not all by-products are bad; for example, organ meats are considered a by-product, and are packed with good nutrition. That being said, the term 'by-product' is very vague and has the potential to contain meat contaminants as well.

It is important to be mindful of the fat content in your cat's diet. Too much fat can lead to weight gain, but certain fats are essential for life. Essential fatty acids are fats the body cannot make and must be included in a diet. Omega-3 fatty acids are mainly found in fish and should be supplemented in the diet to ensure adequate levels. Medium chain triglycerides, such as coconut oil, are also a great addition to a cat's diet.

Low amounts of carbohydrates can be useful in the diet for a quick source of energy. Cats have evolved to thrive on low amounts of carbohydrates, but excessive amounts can lead to weight gain, inflammation and potentially disease. In addition, carbohydrates such as gluten and soy are likely to be genetically modified. However, grains such as millet, barley, and oats are less likely to be genetically modified. Most commercial kibble contains more carbohydrates than your pet needs. Even "grain-free" and "low-carb" labeled diets are too high in carbohydrates. Carbohydrates are used in pet food as part of the extrusion process that is made to produce dry cat food. The heat that is needed and used to extrude kibble produces toxins. Canned foods are also processed at very high temperatures, which causes loss of nutrients and production of toxins.

Optimal nutrition is best achieved with fresh, whole food diets. Alternatives to kibble and canned foods are low temperatures processed foods such as freeze-dried diets and fresh, whole food diets that are either fermented raw or lightly cooked.

Additionally, adequate water consumption is a critical component of your dog's well-being. Dogs require between 45-65mls per kilogram of body weight per day. Ways to increase water consumption are to have free access to multiple sources of water at all times of the day, and to frequently change your dog's water. Furthermore, you can feed your dog a diet with higher water content. Diets such as canned, fresh, or whole food diets have a much higher moisture content than kibble.

Ultimately, when choosing a pet food, it is imperative to choose a food that is approved by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO). Tally Oaks does not support diets that are not AAFCO approved. AAFCO is a non-profit association of local, state, federal, and international regulators whose primary goal is to ensure the health of our pets through nutritional standards and non-misleading labeling of pet food. AAFCO advises pet food manufacturers and state legislators on the appropriate

13

nutritional values needed to support animals at different life stages and how to present nutritional information on product labels.

## Feeding Tips:

Do not change your cat's food frequently. Some cats may be able to tolerate changing foods, however it is typically a common cause of gastrointestinal upset. Another way to prevent gastrointestinal upset in your cat is to limit or completely avoid feeding table food and excessive treats. Frequently feeding table food and/or treats can also lead to your cat holding out to only eat "junk" and refuse to eat their own food. It is alright to reward your cat with treats or safe people food; however, be mindful that comprises a small percentage of your cat's diet, and that you are selecting low fat and low salt options.

Choosing the right pet food can be overwhelming, but it ultimately is one of the most important decisions you will make for your pet, and their diet should suit their specific needs. Every cat's nutritional needs are different depending on its breed, activity level, and individual metabolism. Tally Oaks is here to help guide you provide appropriate nutrition to serve your puppy's individual needs.

## DENTAL CARE



Unfortunately, 75-85% of our pets by the age of three have developed some form of dental disease. Typically, the only sign of dental disease noted by owners is bad breath, which is an indication that your pet's teeth may need attention.

Daily removal of plaque is the key to an effective oral hygiene regimen. If your pet's teeth are not brushed daily, plaque will build up along the gumline, and eventually, calculus will form. Once calculus forms, the gums are then further irritated, and infection progresses to loosen and destroy the attachment of an adult tooth. Severe infections that are under the gums can then spread to the liver, kidneys, heart, and other organs.

Brushing your pet's teeth can be very easy when made as a positive experience for your pet. It is indicated to use a finger brush or soft bristled, pet formulated toothbrush. Furthermore, DO NOT use human toothpaste on your pet as it is not safe. Pet formulated, enzymatic toothpaste should be used and can be picked up at Tally Oaks.

When you start to teach your pet to have their teeth brushed, approach them in an upbeat manner and start slowly. You can start with a washcloth to simply wipe your pet's teeth as you would when you go to brush them. Keep initial sessions very brief, just making contact with a few teeth, be sure to give treats before and afterwards to create a positive experience.

Gradually work up to the point where your fingers are inside the cheeks and you can rub toothpaste along the teeth. Once your pet has become accustomed to the washcloth, you can start with just water on your toothbrush. Finally, you can incorporate toothpaste once your dog has accepting brushing with water. There are good video tutorials on how to adapt your cat to the process, one of which is from Cornell University's Partners in Animal Health called, "Brushing Your Cat's Teeth."

Dental disease is painful for your pet and can become costly, yet it is easily preventable with daily care. The health of your pet starts in its mouth, so it is important to not neglect it!

## SPAY AND NEUTER

## Castration (Neuter):

This is the medical term for surgically sterilizing the male cat or dog. This surgery consists of removing the testicles, which are the source of your dog or cat's male hormonal production. These hormones induce behaviors such as sexual interest, aggression, and urine marking/spraying. Neutering not only helps to eliminate unwanted behaviors, but it also eliminates the ability to produce unwanted offspring; along with decreasing the risk of medical issues such as prostatitis, prostatic abscesses, prostatic and testicular cancer, and perianal tumors. At Tally Oaks, we recommend neutering your cat or dog at around 5-6 months of age. For giant breed dogs, we recommend neutering them slightly later in life, when they have reached skeletal maturity.

## Ovariohysterectomy (Spay):

This is the medical term for surgically sterilizing the female cat or dog. Ovariohysterectomies consist of complete removal of the uterus, both ovaries, and the oviducts. Not only does spaying your cat or dog prevent the attraction of males, pregnancy, and unwanted litters, but it decreases your pets' risk of disease. Intact female cats and dogs are at risk of developing mammary cancer, cystic ovaries, and pyometra (serious infection of the uterus). Generally, Tally Oaks recommends having your cat or dog spayed after their first heat cycle. However, this recommendation can change depending on your individual pet and/or breed. Please consult with Tally Oaks during puppy or kitten-hood when the most appropriate time is to spay your pet.

## General Considerations:

Both spay and neuter procedures require general anesthesia. At Tally Oaks, we recommend pre-anesthetic physical exams and bloodwork to identify any potential problems prior to surgery.

Throughout surgery, we utilize state of the art monitoring equipment that measures heart rate/rhythm, respiratory rate, temperature, blood pressure, blood oxygen levels, and end tidal carbon dioxide. We also ensure your pet is comfortable with a warm air circulating blanket, and thorough pain management.

The staff at Tally Oaks carefully monitors patients throughout their procedure and throughout the duration of anesthetic recovery to ensure they are fully awake and stable.

## SPAY AND NEUTER

## Common Myths About Spaying/Neutering Rebutted:

- Will not cause your pet to become overweight/lazy
- Does not cause immature behaviors
- Does not postpone or delay normal behavioral maturity
- Does not affect personality development
- Does not reduce your pet's instinct to protect the family and/or home
- Does not cause hyperactivity

## Microchipping Your Pet

Did you know that one in three pets will become lost at some point in their life? One way to dramatically decrease the risk of losing your pet is by implanting a microchip. Microchipping your pet is simple and involves injecting a small chip (about the size of a grain of rice) underneath your pet's skin, between their shoulder blades. Typically, at Tally Oaks, we microchip pets at the time of their Spay or Neuter.

The microchip serves as a permanent ID for your pet. The specific microchip number is read by use of a microchip scanner. Once the microchip number is obtained, it can then be looked up and linked back to the microchip's registrant. Therefore, it is imperative that the microchip is registered to your contact information and address, so the identity of your dog or cat can be linked back to you. At Tally Oaks, we register all chips that we implant, to ensure that pets can be linked back with their owners. In a study of 53 shelters nationwide, published by the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, microchipping greatly increases the number of lost pets with their owners.

## NEW KITTEN ADVICE

## Introducing Your Kitten to Your Home

When bringing your kitten home for the first time, he/she should first be in their carrier. The room should be “kitten proof” by removing objects lying around, before letting them out of the carrier. Cats are very curious in nature so they will want to play with and chew on anything on the floor. Furthermore, anything that dangles or hangs will be tempting and should be adjusted so your kitten cannot reach it. In addition to “kitten proofing” the room should be prepped for the kitten, with a litter box, food, water, and kitten-friendly toys.

Once the room is ready, place the kitten on the floor in the carrier and allow it to acclimate for about thirty minutes. No pets should be in the room, family members are ok, and can be softly talking to the kitten. If after thirty minutes the kitten approaches the front of the carrier, or starts meowing at the door, the door can then be opened to explore the room. Allow the kitten to explore on its own, and do not interact with the kitten unless it initiates attention.

Over the next few days, keep the kitten confined in its new room and make frequent visits to play and interact. If your kitten cries when you leave, it is time to open the door and allow it to explore a larger area on its own.

## Introducing Your Kitten to Other Pets

Once your kitten is comfortable with its first room, place your kitten back in their carrier, and move it into another room where your family spends time together. Your kitten should then be introduced to your pets one at a time. Let each pet sniff and look at your new kitten while still in its carrier. Monitor both pets during their introduction period. If for thirty minutes your kitten stays in the back of its carrier, take your kitten back to the original room. Five to ten minutes of introduction is enough time initially together. If either pet becomes agitated or concerned, put the kitten back in their carrier and try again at a later time that day. Repeat this process until all of their interactions become relaxed and comfortable.

Introductions can take a few minutes up to several weeks in duration. It is important to stay patient and allow your pets the time they need to adjust to each other.

## Playing with Your Kitten

It is important to know once your kitten has overcome the fear of being in a new environment, it will start displaying curiosity through energetic play and exploration. Kittens’ two modes of play are predatory (pouncing, grabbing, chasing, and throwing things) and locomotive (running, climbing, leaping, and finding places to play hide and seek).

Toys that you select for your kitten should support these forms of play, such as balls, fake mice, and laser pointers. However, be sure to avoid things your kitten can swallow and cause an obstruction, such as string, yarn, or other small objects.

## NEW KITTEN ADVICE

## Litter Box Solutions

Kittens do not usually have to be trained to use the litter box; it is in their instinct. As long as the box is located in a convenient and quiet place, the kitten will start to use it. If your kitten is eliminating inappropriately, here are some things to consider.

1. Try switching the litter; some cats prefer clumping litter, and there are also some litters available with natural herbs to attract kittens and cats to it. Strong, disinfecting odors can be a turn-off for cats or kittens.
2. Try changing the amount of litter in the box, start with about 1 inch thickness and gradually add more
3. Make sure you have one more litter box than you do the number of cats
4. Make sure to clean the litter box frequently
5. Make sure the litter box is large enough
6. Make sure the litter box offers easy entry and exit
7. Ensure the litter box is easily accessible in your home, while providing privacy to your kitten
8. Some cats prefer a covered box while others prefer open boxes

Cats are very sensitive and therefore small changes to their lifestyle or environment may cause inappropriate elimination. It is therefore important to be mindful of changes in the household when considering inappropriate elimination.

## Scratching and Biting

Scratching and biting are ways that kittens and cats play, as well as defend themselves. If you are using your hands to play with your kitten and they begin to scratch or bite, stop all attention, ignore them, and walk away. Additionally, you can make a loud noise such as clapping your hands or saying "ouch." Never use your hands or feet to play with your kitten, only use safe cat toys.

If you are grooming your kitten and it bites, or tries to bite, make sure you have not unintentionally hurt your kitten. This may be its way of saying stop. Try brushing the kitten again with your thumb under its muzzle and the rest of your fingers on its head, with one hand and the other. Hand brush once or twice gently and then let go. If you stop grooming your kitten the minute it bites you, you are sending a clear message that you will stop what you are doing if biting or scratching occurs.

## PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE IN YOUR MATURE PET

It is important to remember that cats age much faster than people, and large breed dogs age even faster than smaller breeds. When your cat is 7 years or older, he/she is considered a senior pet, and we recommend utilizing preventive care with biennial examinations.

Unfortunately, our pets do not have the capabilities to let us know what is ailing them as they age, and they are adept to hiding symptoms of pain and/or weakness. It is very common to find medical problems on a routine physical exam that even the most conscientious owners are unable to identify. Furthermore, senior pets benefit from screening bloodwork and other testing. Tally Oaks offers Preventive Care lab work packages for all life stages. It is important to note that almost 25% of senior cats that appear healthy on physical exams have underlying disease and being able to obtain an early diagnosis is the key to successful treatment.

The two most common problems seen in adult and senior cats are obesity and dental disease.

Obesity is extremely prevalent in middle aged and senior pets. Obesity is linked to disorders like diabetes, constipation, arthritis, decreased mobility, and respiratory compromise. In general, the leaner your cat is, the better it is for them. Studies indicate that pets that are lean live an average of 2-3 years longer than their overweight peers. Weight control is best managed through a combination of dietary control and exercise.

Dental disease is another significant issue in older pets and about 80% of adults and senior pets have dental disease. The average pet that receives good dental care lives 10-20% longer. Getting in the habit of brushing your cats teeth is one of the most important things you can do to improve and maintain his or her teeth as an older cat. It is important to know that bad breath is not normal for a cat, and is an indicator of disease.

For a long and healthy life, it is imperative to keep your cat's weight lean, keep their teeth healthy by brushing, and seeing your veterinarian on a routine basis, even when there are no apparent signs of illness.

## PET INSURANCE

Pet insurance is a tool that can be utilized to allow you to make decisions with your pet's wellbeing in mind and decrease the worry of cost of services. It is a good option to consider especially during kittenhood or in breeds that are at an increased risk for medical issues. Tally Oaks recommends the following companies for pet insurance.

### **Nationwide**

After your visit, submit a claim, then Nationwide will reimburse you directly.

BestPetInsurance.com

(800) 672-9259

### **Figo**

Submit a claim after your vet visit, Figo then will reimburse you through direct deposit.

figopetinsurance.com

Call: (844) 738-3446

Text: (844) 262-8133