

Pawsitive Press

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Puddy Cat Wellness

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1 “If my cat is an indoor cat, does it really need a vet visit every year?”

2 This is a common question, among others such as does my indoor cat need shots, why does it need a fecal, and do I need flea and heartworm prevention. We at The Animal Hospital of Dunedin are here to help you answer these questions. Your pets are individuals and every case is unique. It is true that the majority of our feline patients are indoor, as opposed to most of our canine patients. Many houses in Florida have dogs and cats though, and screened porches. So when we think about the exposure risks, we have to take those factors into consideration. I do recommend flea prevention for all felines, unless a veterinarian has deemed a product not medically advised which is extremely rare. You have to consider that any dog in the

house that goes outside to use the restroom can bring fleas back in, not to mention us on our clothing. Lots of cats love to enjoy time on screen porches and balconies also, and therefore can have increased exposure during that time. For these same reasons I also advise heartworm prevention in cats. Mosquitoes are the vectors that transmit heartworms and they can get into our porches and houses. A cat’s worm burden with heartworm disease is much less than that of an infected canine; however we do not have treatment to kill their worms like we do in dogs. Most of the feline heartworm products available also have some de-worming in them for intestinal parasite infections, which can be acquired through eating feces,

soils, etc. I advise an annual fecal check for all cats, especially those that do have access to the outdoors, soils, potted plants, etc.

As pets age there are certain health conditions that we become more alert to. In cats the most common conditions are dental disease, hyperthyroidism, kidney failure, diabetes mellitus, and cancer. So even if your pet isn’t due for vaccines every year, or if vaccines aren’t medically advised at that time, it is still very important to get an exam once if not twice a year for your cat. For seniors, pets over the age of seven, I highly advise it twice a year. This way we can keep an eye on your pet’s weight/body condition, gum/tartar condition, heart sounds, organ palpation, etc. It is also ideal to do screening lab work annually, even if your pet is doing well. Getting baselines when your pet isn’t sick gives us something to

Wellness Continued

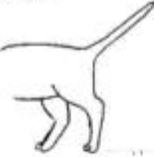
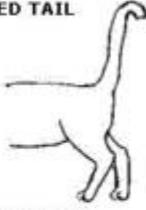
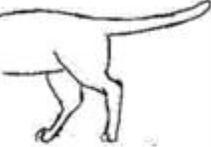
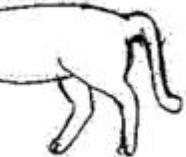
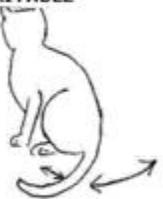
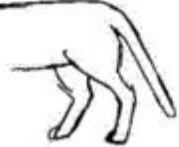
compare to if that happens. Also, sometimes we find early changes that can help us direct preventative care for future health issues. And though many pets tend to be very stoic with dental disease, the bacteria in tartar can cause gingivitis and travel to areas such as heart valves, kidneys, etc. Therefore routine dental cleanings are advised to help prolong your pet's overall well being, not just oral health.

At the Animal Hospital of Dunedin we offer one or three year rabies. We also follow a schedule of every three year feline distemper vaccination in healthy adults. Studies have shown that some vaccines can offer protection for more than one year, so we don't want to over vaccinate. We also offer feline distemper vaccine titers so that we can evaluate if your pet is still protected and not yet in need of a booster even at three years out.

For cats that have any other close contact or exposure to any outside cats, I do advise the feline leukemia vaccine (FeLV). Exposure can be grooming, fights, sneezing, etc. If your cat is at risk I advise getting a FeLV test first, and if the test is negative, then getting boosted for Feline leukemia. The vaccine is administered annually each year if your cat is still in an at risk environment.

Here are a few ideas to get your cat moving!

1. Leave out paper bags, tissue paper, and cardboard boxes to inspire play.
2. Provide fresh catnip.
3. Encourage your cat to chase toys, balls, sticks with feathers, or flashlight pointers. Be careful not to shine the pointer in your pet's eyes – or anyone else's.
4. Inspire climbing with a cat tree or cat condo.
5. Provide a scratching post or pad.
6. Encourage play with other pets. You may even want to consider adopting another cat.
7. Train your cat to perform tricks for low-calorie treats.
8. Get your cat a food puzzle. Specially designed cat toys require your cat to work to remove treats inside.

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