



VET mates

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT YOUR PETS

FEBRUARY 2016



PICK OF THE LITTER Kitten starter packs

Before you get your kitten.

Totally Vets have fantastic 'Kitten Starter Packs' available for purchase. These contain a litter tray, scoop and kitty litter, kitten food and a food bowl, a toy, flea and worm treatments and our "Kitten Kindy" booklet, which will give you all the information you need to know about kittens.

Purchased separately these things would cost around \$70 but together the pack is only \$40!

Cute and cuddly kittens

Kayla Groves

Having a new addition to the family isn't always planned - sometimes it's the big round eyes and quiet meow that pull on your heartstrings, and before you know it you have a kitty companion for life.

If you have made the decision to adopt a new kitten, it's a good idea to make sure you are getting a healthy one. Look for a playful, confident, clear-eyed kitten that is doing all the "normal kitten things" like playing, eating well and using a litter tray.

Ideally your kitten will have been introduced to a litter tray already. When you take your kitten home, show it where the litter tray is located and let it scratch and explore it. Try to place your kitten in the tray after meals, after waking up from a sleep and after playing to remind it to use the tray. Make sure the tray is kept very clean - kittens are clean animals and will not want to go to the toilet where the tray is soiled so will seek elsewhere to go.

Kittens need to be wormed every two weeks until they are twelve weeks-old, then every month until they are six months-old, then every three months for the rest of their lives. When giving your kitten a worm treatment you should make sure you are treating it with a suitable product - not all products are safe

to use on kittens. You also need to make sure that you have an idea of how much your kitten weighs, you can do this by weighing it on your kitchen scales or bringing your kitten into the vet clinic.

Flea control is very important in such young animals. If kittens are infested with fleas, they can become severely anaemic from the fleas ingesting their blood. Apart from the risk of anaemia they also cause skin irritation and can carry tapeworm. To ensure you don't get a flea problem in your household, you should flea treat all of your animals, all year around - not just in summer. We recommend using a good quality topical application, on the back of the neck - don't hesitate to ask what will be best for your situation.

There are huge benefits to getting your kitten de-sexed. An obvious one is not having to worry about supporting the extra mouths to feed when your female cat produces litter after litter of kittens. When you have a de-sexed cat they are less likely to roam, fight, and contract viruses like FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus). We recommend getting your kitten de-sexed at around five to six months of age - this seems to be the best time as they have not yet reached sexual maturity and are better equipped to handle an anaesthetic than a very young kitten.

Vaccinations are important to help prevent some illnesses such as "cat flu" or "snuffles". Your kitten will need the initial vaccine and then a booster injection three to four weeks later. Usually after their initial course as kittens they will then need a vaccine every year or second year.

New opening hours

Monday	8.00am - 6.00pm
Tuesday	8.00am - 6.00pm
Wednesday	8.00am - 7.00pm
Thursday	8.00am - 6.00pm
Friday	8.00am - 6.00pm
Saturday	9.00am - 4.00pm
Sunday	10.00am - 12.00pm urgent care by appointment

We are now also utilizing the Massey University after-hours clinic in Palmerston North. The purpose-built and fully-equipped emergency and critical care centre is staffed throughout the night and on weekends; and is supported by specialists in surgery, internal medicine, emergency and critical care, anaesthesia and diagnostic imaging.

If you are unsure as to whether you should be presenting your pet for emergency care, you are able to ring and speak directly to a nurse. They can help to determine whether your pet needs to be seen urgently or whether treatment can wait until normal business hours.

The Massey number to ring is 0800 738 363 or alternatively you may still call us on 06 323 6161 for advice.

If you would like further information please phone us or drop in to our Feilding clinic.

Cats can be microchipped too

Rebekah Willink

You may not be aware that as well as dogs, cats can be microchipped too.

It is a legal requirement for most dogs to be microchipped but at this stage it is not legal for cats... but it is an option.

The microchip is a small transponder that when scanned, emits a unique identification code and they are a great method of identifying lost, stolen or injured animals. A microchip is implanted via a needle - just like an injection.

If you choose to have your cat microchipped then we will have the microchip details stored on our database here at Totally Vets, and there is also the option to have your cat's microchip details logged with the New Zealand Companion Animal Register (NZCAR).

The NZCAR accepts microchip information for all companion animals, is available to access online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and costs a small additional fee to join; on top of the microchip implantation fee. The NZCAR is used by organisations like the SPCA and other vet clinics and is the only nationwide communal database for cat microchip information.

If your pet is already microchipped and they are not currently registered with the NZCAR we can arrange this for you at any time. There is a simple form for you to complete and sign and then we'll do the rest.

Killer fleas

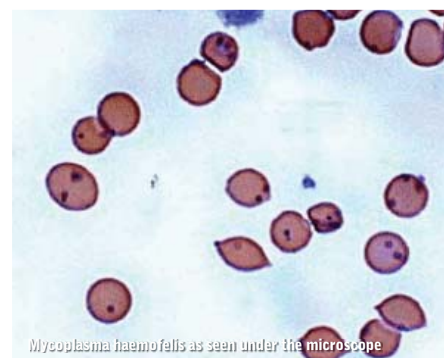
Sally Browning

Are you aware of the potential killer carried in flea saliva?

Feline infectious anaemia is caused by a parasitic bacteria called *Mycoplasma haemofelis*. A cat becomes infected by a bite from an infected flea; and the bacteria attaches to the red blood cells and multiplies in the cats blood stream. The immune system senses that these cells are sick and kills them by removal in the spleen. When enough red blood cells have become infected and destroyed the cat becomes anaemic.

Anaemia makes the cat feel weak and lethargic as the life force of oxygen is not carried to their organs. They often breathe quickly, sleep a lot and stop eating.

On examination the vet will find pale gums, a fast heart rate with a murmur, increased breathing rate and effort and sometimes a fever. Cats are very good at hiding disease and may be very ill before you notice it.



Mycoplasma haemofelis as seen under the microscope

Diagnosis is made by clinical examination and a blood test, looking at red blood cell levels. We have seen cats with a red blood cell count of just 7% (normal is 27-47%) - this can be life threatening. Sometimes the parasite is visible on a blood smear as small dark spots inside the cell.

Treatment may require a blood transfusion and very ill cats are kept in hospital and handled carefully, as they can suddenly deteriorate with stress. An antibiotic called Doxycycline is used to stop the parasite from multiplying, and steroids prevent more destruction of cells by the immune system. Of course prevention is better than cure - and regular application of an effective flea treatment is the only defence.



Totally Vets prints **Vet Mates** on paper using FSC certified mixed source pulp from Well Managed forests and other controlled sources. The paper is produced under an environmental management system ISO 14001.

SPECIAL CASE

Bravest Bailey

Tasha Kirk

This is Bailey, a 1 year-old ginger Persian cat. While her parents were away on holiday Bailey decided she too could have a getaway of her own; she ended up getting lost and was missing for a whole week.

When Bailey turned up at home she had a serious limp in one of her back legs. Her owners brought her to the clinic straight away, where she was given some pain relief before taking x-rays to find out what was going on. As it turned out, poor Bailey had been hit by a slug gun; and had a bullet lodged in her

left hind leg which had smashed her femur. After discussing things with her owners it was decided that amputation of the broken leg was the best option for Bailey. The night before the surgery a Fentanyl pain-relief patch was placed on Bailey's side which gave her 72 hours of constant pain relief.

Vet Christine went to surgery the next day and removed her leg, which took just over an hour. While Bailey was in recovery the nurses gave her additional pain relief and she was settled for the night.

The next morning Bailey was like a new lady. She had eaten all her chicken breakfast and was ready for seconds! Eating meant that Bailey could start her non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, which would also give her additional pain-relief as well as help with any bruising and swelling. Before giving anti-inflammatories it is important that the patient

has eaten first, otherwise side effects like stomach ulcers can ensue.

Bailey has definitely bounced back, with vet nurse Tasha keeping a close eye on her to make sure that she didn't run too fast around the cat ward. She is already mastering the art of the 3-legged cat life. Bailey was the chattiest cat in the cat ward during her stay, telling all the other cats and the nurses about her life story.

In terms of recovery, Bailey will soon be back to her normal self. She was kept room-bound until her sutures were removed, then she had free reign of the house for a few weeks to make sure she was back to 100% before being let loose outside; to go on more cat adventures - a bit closer to home hopefully!



BREED PROFILE

The Sphynx

Helen Ryan

While the lack of coat on a Sphynx is not your average cat lover's cup of tea, this rare breed does have its admirers.

Many cats can tend to be aloof in regard to their owners but the Sphynx however requires special attention that attributes to a close bond between cat and owner.

A relative of the Devon Rex, the breed itself is recognised as being healthy and robust. They generally have a wedge-shaped head and sturdy, heavy bodies. The skin is the colour their fur would be and this could be any of the usual cat colouring and/or markings.



Despite the Sphynx's unique lack of coat, it is not truly hairless but covered in very short fine "fuzzy" hair - stroking them has been likened to stroking a peach. This hair is not enough to protect them from the cold or heat and they are therefore prone to both sunburn and hypothermia. Consequently, spending long periods of time outside can be detrimental to their health.

Contrary to popular belief, the lack of coat does not mean that the Sphynx is the cat for those with cat-specific allergies. These allergies

are not triggered by the hair but by a protein in cat saliva and sebaceous glands.

Because of the lack of hair, Sphynx cats require more maintenance than their coated cousins. They are reluctant to groom as the rasping action of the tongue can cause trauma to their skin. Body oils which would normally be absorbed by the hair build up on the skin giving it an oily feel and a rancid smell. There is little or no hair in their ears to protect them so they have dirtier ears and more ear wax. The skin under and around their nails gets dirty and oily too. Weekly bathing, ear and nail cleaning is needed to help with this.

A very rare breed, Totally Vets has only one client who owns and breeds Sphynx cats. The reception and hospital staff all love to 'ooh and ah' over them when they visit us - these two little guys are Earnest and Cairo; who visited us recently for their 'little boys operations'.

Heat stroke is a HOT issue

Helen Ryan

Summer is a fun time for all, but the heat can be lethal to our pets.

We really hope that knowing how to avoid heatstroke and being more aware of the risk factors and warning signs will help prevent unnecessary deaths.

The most important thing to realise is that dogs and cats DO NOT sweat like humans do. They release heat through their tongues primarily, and to a lesser extent their foot pads and nose. This is much less effective than sweating - so even if you are comfortable, your dog may be too hot. This means that when you leave an animal in an enclosed space such as a car, even if the vehicle is in the shade and even if the outside temperature is cool,

the temperature and humidity build up very quickly once panting begins. The animal will struggle to get rid of the excess heat quickly enough and its body temperature will start to rise above the normal 39°C, often in a matter of minutes.

Big dogs (St Bernard), dogs with flat faces (Boxer, Pug), overweight, older, dehydrated or anxious pets are all more likely to develop heat stroke. Remember that even relatively cool areas can be dangerous if the animal is unable to access cold water.

Heat stroke can be life-threatening. Breathing will become rapid, frantic and noisy. The tongue and mucous membranes will become bright red, the saliva thick, and vomiting may occur. Animals with heat stroke tend to walk very slowly, with a panicked expression, and be unaware of their environment. Once the body temperature exceeds 41-42°C, damage can occur to the kidneys, liver, gastrointestinal tract, heart and brain. If left unchecked, your pet will become progressively weaker, go into a coma and may die.

To help, you can hose down your dog with cool water (not cold). Let the water run continuously in the groin area as there are large numbers of blood vessels there which will allow for more rapid cooling of the blood. Do not cover your pet with a wet towel as this will limit the evaporation. Your vet will perform a thorough check and start any necessary treatment when you arrive at the vet clinic.

The most important message is this - heat stroke is usually avoidable:

- Do not leave your pet in an enclosed space for any length of time - especially the car
- Do not exercise your pet during the hottest part of the day
- Ensure there is access to shade and lots of fresh water, both before and after activity

If you suspect heat stroke, please ring to let us know you are coming, so that treatment can be started more quickly, which will give a better chance of a successful outcome.

TOP TIPS

Car travel with anxious dogs

Rebekah Willink

Some dogs lose their mind with excitement when it comes to going for a ride in the car (car = dog park!), while others can lose their mind with fear or stress.

Here are some top tips to help make car travel with an anxious dog a wee bit more of a breeze.

Start early. This is by far the most important step in helping your dog to become comfortable with car travel for life. Begin desensitising your dog to car travel from puppyhood, starting with short drives or periods of time in the car paired with positive experiences - something yummy to chew on while the car is parked in the driveway for example. You can then start to build up the length of time they spend in the car or how far you drive, and be sure to mix things up. Make

sure you drive to fun places as well, instead of always to the vet clinic for an injection. But at the same time, don't always end in a destination; sometimes just drive around the block and then go home again. Dogs are pretty smart - they'll very quickly figure it out if the only time they ever go in the car is to go somewhere "bad"!

Smells secure. Make sure your dog has a familiar smelling bed or blanket to snuggle up on while you're driving. If the environment smells familiar they'll be less likely to be stressed.

Visual barriers. Travelling your dog in a secured crate which is covered by a thick blanket is a great way to go. Some dogs are anxious about car travel as it makes them feel sick, just like it can people. So, blocking the visual stimulation of things whizzing past the window at high speed may help. Be sure to desensitise your dog to the crate first if they are not used to being in one.

Empty tummy. Especially if you are going on a long drive, be sure not to feed your dog a meal too soon before travelling. If a dog vomits in the car they can learn to associate the feeling of being sick with simply being in



or near the car, and might not want to get in there again next time.

Fresh air. Ensure the car is well ventilated, either with a slightly opened window or by having the car's fan going. We've even seen people with battery operated fans in their cars. Fresh air helps to ease the feeling of nausea.

Anti-anxiety wonder products. The Thundershirt and Adaptil spray are over-the-counter anti-anxiety aids which work wonders for car travel fears. Put the Thundershirt on your dog 10-15 minutes before the drive to help them feel calm from the very beginning. Spray the Adaptil onto a bandana 10-15 minutes beforehand as well - this will allow time for the alcohol in the spray to dissipate.

Extreme fears of phobias of the car however may require a little extra help - so please come and see us if this is the case. Good luck, and happy travelling.