

Preventative Medicine

Feline Vaccinations

Vaccinations are the front line in our defense against disease. Though they are the most obvious forms of prevention, vaccinations may be one of the most often overlooked.

Because of this, The Cat Doctor emphasizes keeping current on your cat's immunizations. But not all cats need to be vaccinated for all diseases. Some lead risky and daring lives as outdoor adventurers. Others live in the lap of luxury in the penthouse of an elegant high-rise. Each cat's situation is unique. Using guidelines developed by the American Association of Feline Practitioners, our Doctors will design a vaccine protocol especially for your cat. Here are the most common vaccinations we provide at The Cat Doctor:

- [Rabies](#)
- [Distemper \(called Panleukopenia\)](#)
- [Respiratory viruses \(including Herpes\)](#)
- [Feline Leukemia](#)
- [Feline Infectious Peritonitis \(FIP\)](#)

When is a vaccination more than just a vaccination? When your cat comes to The Cat Doctor of course! For instance, when your cat receives his vaccinations, he's given a complete physical examination by a Doctor. It's just one more way we add value to the quality of medicine practiced at The Cat Doctor.

Something else you may want to know: The Cat Doctor uses only the highest quality vaccines. Formulated specifically for cats, they provide excellent protection while minimizing potential side effects. We give most vaccines just under the skin (called subcutaneous injections) instead of directly into the muscle. As you can imagine, subcutaneous injections cause your cat very little discomfort.

Feline Heartworm Prevention

Heartworms are parasites carried by mosquitoes that infest both cats and dogs in Georgia. Even inside cats can get heartworms. These parasites live in the bloodstream and can damage your cat's heart and lungs. Fortunately, monthly heartworm preventative is available as a topical application or as a chewable treat. Since all cats are susceptible to heartworms, all cats should stay on a monthly heartworm preventative all year long.

Currently, there are no products in the United States approved for the treatment of feline heartworm infection. Cats with evidence of disease in the lungs and their blood vessels consistent with feline heartworm infection should be monitored with chest X-rays every six to twelve months as needed. Supportive therapy with an anti-inflammatory medication can help decrease lung damage and improve the chances of survival.

Since there is no approved treatment for cats diagnosed with heartworms, prevention is critical. We also recommend that all cats be tested for both antigens and antibodies to heartworms prior to administration of a heartworm preventative. We offer both topical and oral medications to prevent heartworms. These products are considered effective in preventing the development of adult heartworms when administered properly on a monthly basis. Speak with our veterinarians to see which product would be best for your cat.

Feline Flea and Tick Prevention

Fleas are more than a nuisance: they cause a number of medical problems, such as transmission of tapeworms. Georgia's warm climate and flea's resistance to insecticides make an ideal environment for reproduction. Ten fleas can lay up to 90,000 eggs in one month! Flea eggs hatch every 10-14 days, so it's necessary to treat your house several times to get rid of all fleas.

Fleas spend only 10% of their time on your cat. The rest of the time they are in the environment. That's why you must treat your house for fleas the same time you treat your cat.

Do you have a flea problem? If your cat goes outside or if you have a dog that does, the answer is YES! The most common indication that your cat has fleas is scratching. Other signs of these pesky little critters are hair loss and black "specks" on your cat's fur. Try combing your cat with a flea comb. It's an easy way to tell if he's infected.

The Cat Doctor carries several safe and effective products to control fleas on your cat and in your home. What's important is customizing a program for the special needs of you and your cat. What works in one situation may not work in another. Our knowledgeable staff can design a flea control program that works for you.

[Click here for instructions on how to treat your house for fleas.](#)

Feline Dental Health

Just like you, your cat can suffer from toothaches and periodontal disease. Left untreated, poor dental health can progress to cavities, abscesses – even loss of teeth. Advanced periodontal disease can produce toxins which can damage your cat's heart and kidneys. If your cat is over 2 years of age, chances are that he suffers from significant periodontal disease.

Often, the first sign of a problem is bad breath. Though not a disease itself, it is a symptom of poor dental health and should be checked as soon as possible. Check your cat's teeth for an accumulation of brown tartar or reddened gums, particularly on the back teeth. Periodontal disease starts with plaque: a combination of food debris, bacteria, and saliva. When not removed regularly, built-up plaque becomes mineralized into tartar. Tartar accelerates the process by trapping more food debris and bacteria. Gums become inflamed from toxins released by the bacteria. Eventually, dying tissue, food debris, and bacteria accumulate to create bad breath.

More than fifty percent of cats over three years old will be affected by tooth resorption. Teeth affected by these lesions will erode and finally fracture. The reason for the resorption is unknown. Cats affected with tooth resorption may show excessive salivation, bleeding in the mouth, or have difficulty eating. While tooth resorption can be quite painful, a majority of affected cats do not show obvious clinical signs. Just like you, your cat can suffer from

toothaches and periodontal disease. Left untreated, poor dental health can progress to cavities, abscesses – even loss of teeth. Advanced periodontal disease can produce toxins which can damage your cat’s heart and kidneys. If your cat is over two years of age, chances are that he suffers from significant periodontal disease. Bacteria that cause plaque and periodontal disease can lead to organ damage that can shorten your cat’s life. Cats frequently hide discomfort so well that you won’t notice problems until they become severe. That’s why it’s important to have your cat’s teeth checked at every well-cat exam.

At The Cat Doctor, we remove plaque and tartar then polish exposed tooth surfaces. We also clean tooth loss and gingival, a process called “root planning and curettage”. This is vital to performing a complete dental cleaning. We also perform extractions and gum surgery when necessary. Sound dental health can be maintained through a program of regular checkups and home dental care. Ask the Doctor about how to prepare for and schedule a dental exam or dental cleaning and how to protect and extend the benefits of cleaning your cat’s teeth.

[Click here to see our Dental Package](#)

Nutrition

Labels on pet food can be very difficult to interpret. Unfortunately, manufacturers are only required to list things like "crude" protein, etc., which is the gross amount of protein in the diet. It has little to do with "digestible" protein, which is what is available in the diet to your cat. The only thing on the label that is helpful is the acronym "AAFCO" which stands for the American Association of Feed Control Officers. This means the diet conforms to minimum standards of quality. It's not much, but at least it's a minimum. Cat's dietary needs change over time, just like humans. Consequently, it's always best to discuss your cat’s dietary needs with us during the physical examination.

For more information on Nutrition, [click here](#).

Insurance

Many of our clients now have pet insurance. It removes the economic issue from the medical decision and lets you focus on what's best for your cat. There is now coverage that is quite comprehensive. Look for a company that uses a co-pay (like 80/20) instead of a "benefit schedule" to calculate their reimbursement to provide better coverage. Also, remember they will exclude pre-existing conditions, so you'll need to apply for coverage before your pet is sick.