



# Chillicothe Animal Clinic, Inc.

*Your Other Family Doctors*<sup>™</sup>

1100 Eastern Avenue • Chillicothe, Ohio 45601 • (740)773-4133 • [www.ChillicotheVets.com](http://www.ChillicotheVets.com)

## Pet-Proofing Your Home

Kittens and puppies are lively and curious, which can get them into serious trouble. Remember that your young friend sees everything from a much lower vantage point than you and may be attracted to things you do not see while standing up.

It's impossible to totally pet-proof your home against accidents, but here are some recommendations:

- ↑ Securely screen all windows to help prevent falls. Keep your pet off balconies, upper porches, and high decks.
- ↑ Securely store cleaning supplies, laundry detergent, bleach, paint, paint thinner, pesticides, fertilizer, disinfectants, mothballs, roach and rat poisons, medications, and antifreeze. Make sure you keep these in tightly closed areas to which your pet cannot gain access. Keep all cabinet doors locked securely.
- ↑ Remove poisonous houseplants, or place them in hanging baskets completely out of reach of all pets. Some plants that are poisonous include amaryllis, English ivy, narcissus, dieffenbachia, mistletoe, poinsettia, holly, philodendron, azalea, rhododendron, daffodil, foxglove, bleeding heart, iris, ivy, oleander, rubber plant, tobacco, tulip, clematis, morning glory, and weeping fig.
- ↑ Keep toilet lids down. Pets may decide to play in the water and the lid could close and trap them. Toilet bowl cleaners are also harmful if swallowed.
- ↑ Store plastic bags where pets cannot get inside them and suffocate or chew/tear them and swallow bits of plastic. Plastic six-pack holders used for packaging beverages should also be cut apart to prevent possible strangulation in small pets.
- ↑ Keep exposed electrical cords as short as possible or tack them against a baseboard so your pet cannot chew or play with them.
- ↑ Never give your pet any medication without first consulting your veterinarian. Never use over the counter products on pets without first checking with your veterinarian. Veterinarians are the true pet experts. Guard against potential exposure to human medications. Even in small doses, aspirin, acetaminophen, diet pills, sleeping pills, and tranquilizers can all be fatal to your pet.
- ↑ Keep all dresser drawers, trunks, and closets closed. Always check to see where your pet is before closing refrigerator doors, the oven, washer, or dryer.
- ↑ Always be sure your pet is secure before leaving them alone. We strongly recommend the pet to be confined in a crate for the first few months.
- ↑ If your pet is allowed outdoors, always be sure to blow your horn and bang on the car hood before starting and moving your vehicle. Kittens especially like to crawl under the hood to keep warm.
- ↑ Keep sewing supplies out of your pet's reach. Buttons, needles, pins, and thread can hurt their mouth or cause intestinal obstructions if swallowed. The same goes for nails, staples, crews, brads, ear plugs, and aluminum can tabs.
- ↑ Do not use electric blankets for your pet's bedding.
- ↑ Never put anything other than an appropriate-sized collar around a pet's neck. Ribbons can easily choke your pet if they should get caught on anything.





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### **Spaying or Neutering Your Pet**

**Ovariohysterectomy** is the medical term for spaying the female patient. It is a surgical procedure which removes both the ovaries and uterus. In the dog and cat, one of the major reasons for performing the sterilization surgery is to eliminate the annoying “signs of heat” which cause males to be attracted. If the uterus alone was removed, the pet would still come into heat but could not get pregnant. Removal of both the ovaries and uterus completely eliminate the annoying signs of the female patient’s heat cycle.

**Castration** is the medical term for surgically sterilizing the male patient. The testicles are removed because they are the major source of male hormones which cause sexual interest, aggression, and urine marking of territory. Therefore, neutering the male patient provides significant advantage to the pet owner, as well as eliminating the ability to produce unwanted offspring and decreasing the risk of future medical problems such as prostate and testicular cancers.

Prior to surgery, all patients receive a pre-anesthetic physical examination. Any potential problems found result in a phone call to you and are thoroughly discussed at that time. Just as your own doctor would never take you to surgery without first running blood tests, we recommend a pre-surgical blood screening which can detect many potential problems. This is an optional way you can increase the anesthesia safety for your pet.

The procedures are performed under general anesthesia. The pet sleeps painlessly through the entire surgical procedure. Anesthesia choices used in our clinic are similar to those used in humans undergoing major surgery. We choose anesthesia to make surgery as safe as possible for patients of all ages.

Surgery is performed in an operating room equipped with heart and respiratory monitors, emergency equipment, oxygen and ventilation equipment, cauterization equipment, and modern surgical instruments. All surgery is performed using sterile gloves, surgical gown, surgical mask, and surgical cap; no one is permitted in the operating room during surgery without a surgical mask and cap and no one is permitted to assist with surgery unless also wearing a gown and gloves. Surgical instrument packs are never used on more than one animal without re-sterilization. As a member of the **American Animal Hospital Association**, we are committed to quality and safety; we maintain high standards for both anesthesia and surgical procedures.

After surgery, each patient is carefully monitored by our staff until fully awake and stable. No patient is dismissed from the hospital until we are satisfied that they are fully recovered from anesthesia.

There is little home-care required after discharge; patients usually go home the same day the surgery is performed and home care instructions will be provided when your pet is discharged.

It is important to know that your pet’s safety is a priority; if you choose surgery somewhere else, make sure to ask what the surgery includes and tour their facility. **Spaying and neutering is a one-time procedure for your pet. Make sure you get it done right!**





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## Spay and Neuter Facts

All pets should be spayed or neutered for many reasons:

1. Females (Ovariohysterectomy)
  - a. Prevents signs of estrus (heat)
  - b. Decreases surplus of puppies and kittens
  - c. Decreases the chance of developing mammary tumors later in life
  - d. Decreases the chance of cystic ovaries and uterine infections
2. Males (Castration)
  - a. Decreases the desire to roam the neighborhood
  - b. Decreases aggression- become more loving pets
  - c. Decreases incidence of prostate cancer
  - d. Prevents the odor of tomcat urine
  - e. Reduces pets from "marking their territory" and spraying urine



3. Your community will also benefit

Unwanted animals are a big concern. Stray animals can easily become a public nuisance; soiling parks and streets, ruining shrubs, frightening children or elderly people, creating noise and other disturbances, causing automobile accidents, and sometimes even killing livestock or other pets. As a potential source of rabies and other diseases, they can become a public health hazard. The capture, impoundment, and eventual destruction of unwanted animals will cost taxpayers millions of dollars each year.

4. Facts about spaying and neutering

- a. Spaying and neutering do not cause your pet to be fat or lazy; that comes from overfeeding and poor exercise
- b. Personalities are not negatively altered after the surgery
- c. Surgical risk is very slight due to modern anesthesia and surgical techniques; there is always a small risk when anesthesia is used
- d. It is much easier to spay an animal before they go through a heat cycle due to the smaller size of the reproductive tract
- e. It is best to spay or neuter your pet between 6 and 8 months of age



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## Declawing Your Cat

Cat claws can be very destructive to draperies, carpeting, and furniture in your home. Perhaps your kitty is scratching you every time he is picked up. It makes us all upset when our pets do things around the house we do not like. However, it is also difficult to be mad when the cat is only doing “what comes naturally.”

We strongly recommend you consider declawing cats that spend time in the house. Perhaps you have heard other say that it is cruel, inhumane, or that once done the cat becomes defenseless. Maybe you tried the plastic “nail caps” but have been frustrated with them coming off or needing frequent replacement. Did you buy a scratching post only to have a cat refuse to use it?

### Here are the facts about declawing cats:

- ↗ When cats are made to live with us in our homes, it is somewhat an unnatural environment for them. However, consider that it is a known fact that cats living totally indoors will live at least 2-3 times longer than an outside cat because they are not as likely exposed to dogs, cat fights, cars, disease, and abusive people. Therefore it makes good sense to help your cat live the best life possible by keeping it inside your house and making it an accepted member of your family. This may entail declawing it to prevent damage to the home and those living in it.
- ↗ Declawing is not a cruel procedure. It is much crueler to get mad at the cat for following its natural instincts or decide you cannot keep the cat due to the damage to your home.
- ↗ Declawed cats are not defenseless. Cats do not fight with their front claws. They bite and scratch with the rear feet. They can also still climb trees to escape without front claws.
- ↗ No cat is too old to be declawed, however, the younger cat is when surgery is performed, the faster the recovery. 12-16 week old kittens are often running all over the house the day after surgery.
- ↗ The rear feet can also be declawed but is only recommended if your cat damaged you or the furniture with the back feet or for medical reasons.

**What is involved?** The surgery is done under general anesthesia. The last joint of the toe that contains the claw is surgically removed. The surgical incisions are closed with surgical adhesive (older-larger cats may require sutures, but this is not common). The feet may be sore for 1-2 weeks, but excessive post-operative pain is rare except in older, overweight cats. Special litter recommendations are made to ensure that nothing sticks to the feet to cause an infection. Otherwise, no special home care is required.

Other than spaying and neutering, declawing is probably the most important surgical procedure for your kitten to help ensure a satisfactory relationship between the cat and you, its owner. We recommend declawing house cats at 16 weeks of age or as soon thereafter as possible.





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### **Nutrition for Kittens**

Unlike most pets, cats remain true to their “meat-eater” heritage and have special requirements.

Cats cannot process vitamins directly from vegetables, so a cat must eat the meat of animals that can convert vegetable vitamins to a digestible form. That’s why in the wild a cat must eat its prey’s entire carcass, to derive essential proteins, minerals, and vitamins. For example, taurine is an amino acid that is vital to eyesight. Non-meat eaters can make taurine in their body, but cats cannot. Therefore, they must eat foods that contain taurine.

Commercial diets must be balanced and nutritional, specialized, and concentrated in small portions. Therefore, cat foods are slightly more expensive than dog foods. Wet or dry food for a cat should contain 30%-40% protein. We highly recommend a high-quality kitten food for all kittens. It can be fed free-choice. Only put out what the kitten will probably eat in a one day period. We prefer to put fresh food out every day.

Water is extremely important cats. Insufficient fluid intake can cause the urine to become too concentrated leading to urinary stone problems. It is interesting to note that as cats get older, their thirst reflex decreases. This means as cats get older, their daily water intake may decrease. An adult cat should drink 1 cup of water per day.

If the kitten does not eat well within the first 36 hours in the new home, it may be that it misses familiar surroundings. It may be necessary to force feed the kitten to stimulate appetite.

The major appetite stimulant for cats is smell! Since dry foods do not have as strong a smell as canned food, some cats are more reluctant to eat dry food.

Make diet changes slowly. Any abrupt change can cause digestive upsets resulting in vomiting and/or diarrhea.

We do not recommend giving your cat milk. It is not necessary to their diet and can also cause digestive upsets.

Allow your kitten plenty of rest time. Cats sleep about 22 hours each day. Adequate rest is necessary for optimum growth and development. Shaking when sleeping is “Mother Nature’s way” of exercising the muscles.





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### **Three Diseases that Pose Deadly Risks to Your Cat**

Your cat could be at risk from one or more of the “Big Three” diseases of felines. Feline Leukemia (FeLV), feline infectious peritonitis (FIP), and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) rank one, two, and three, respectively, as infectious disease killers of cats in the United States. These diseases are contagious, incurable, and most often fatal. Caused by viruses, they affect the cat’s immune system, and in some cases FeLV will predispose a cat to FIP, or vice versa.

To protect pets, concerned cat owners should be aware of these diseases and how they’re spread. Diagnostic tests are available that can determine if a cat has FeLV or FIV, and vaccines can protect against FeLV and FIP.

#### **Feline Leukemia**

The first FeLV vaccine became available in 1985, yet FeLV still kills nearly one million cats a year. The most likely explanation is that cat owners remain unaware of this danger to their pets and the steps they can take to protect them.

Cats get FeLV through close contact with infected cats. Cats in multi-cat households and outdoor cats are at most risk.

FeLV attacks and weakens a cat’s immune system, leaving it susceptible to many life-threatening infections. It can also cause cancer. Not all cats exposed to the virus become infected; some fight it off and become immune, and others become carriers.

Once a cat is permanently infected, though, the virus shortens its life. About 83% of infected cats die within three years, and almost half of these die within the first year.

To protect your cat, first have it tested to make sure it doesn’t carry FeLV; if it doesn’t, it should be vaccinated. An initial two doses, three weeks apart, followed by annual boosters are recommended. Kittens as young as nine weeks of age can be vaccinated.

#### **Feline Infectious Peritonitis**

Although scientists identified FIP over a quarter century ago, the first breakthrough didn’t occur until 1991 when the first vaccine was introduced. There is no cure for this disease. FIP kills at least half a million cats a year in this country.





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Because there are no tests to distinguish FIP from other, less harmful, related feline viruses, FIP is easily misdiagnosed. Its symptoms (weight loss, lethargy, and vomiting for example) are also misleading because they're common to many other diseases; but once symptoms are seen, it's generally too late for all but trying to ease the cat's suffering.

Cats get different forms of FIP. In the wet form, severe respiratory distress causes a buildup of fluid in the cat's chest or abdomen. A dry form attacks the cat more slowly, and an early diagnosis is hindered by a general lack of observable signs. Cats can also have a combination of these two forms of FIP.

FIP is especially hard on young cats 6 months to 5 years of age and on cats more than 11 years old. Cats most at risk include those in multi-cat households, purebreds, and those allowed outdoors. FIP is spread through direct contact between cats, or even in the womb of an infected mother cat. Stress increases infection rates, as do steroids, crowding, malnutrition, and other infections such as FeLV.

The FIP vaccine is given as nose drops. Healthy cats 16 weeks of age or older should receive two doses three to four weeks apart, followed by a yearly booster.

Check with us to determine the level of risk your cat faces from FIP and whether vaccination is appropriate. FIP is currently the most serious disease of cats for which there is no effective treatment. Prevention is the best medicine.

## **Feline Immunodeficiency Virus**

FIV belongs to the same subfamily of viruses as the virus that causes human AIDS (although the FIV virus is not communicable to humans). This virus can lie dormant in cats for years before signs of illness appear.

Two to six weeks after exposure to FIV, an infected cat may have a fever and swollen lymph nodes. The cat may then appear normal for years; but the last, and fatal, stage brings a weakened immune system and other infections. This can last more than three years.

FIV is spread primarily through biting. Outdoor cats or cats exposed to outdoor cats are at high risk; aggressive males are at highest risk.

There is no FIV vaccine, but a simple blood test can determine if a cat is infected. Protect against FIV by keeping cats indoors, neutering male cats to reduce the urge to roam or fight, and having any new cat tested before introducing it into a household with other cats.





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## What Diseases Should My Cat be Protected Against?

Many serious diseases can be prevented by vaccination. Even if always kept indoors, your cat can be exposed to viruses carried in the air, dust, or on clothing. Vaccination is inexpensive protection against costly treatment or premature death of your pet. Booster immunizations are necessary to continue protection.

**Feline Panleukopenia** is a severe and often fatal gastroenteritis. Symptoms include depression, dehydration, and collapse. It is very contagious. Vaccination provides a high level of long-lasting protection.

**Feline Rhinotracheitis and Calici** (Upper Respiratory Infection) are not usually serious and are very common in unvaccinated cats. Vaccinations are moderately effective. Cats at high risk may require semi-annual vaccinations.

**Feline Chlamydia Psittaci** is a bacterial infection causing respiratory infection and painful inflammation and swelling of conjunctiva (the membrane around the eye). Infection in colonies of cats can last for long periods due to re-infection. Symptoms include tearing, occasional sneezing, and nasal discharge.

**Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV)** is one of the most important viruses infecting cats. FeLV tends to become a persistent infection and depresses the immune system of cats. FeLV is an important cause of anemia in cats and can cause cancers of several types. **We recommend having your cat tested for FeLV.** Our FeLV combination test also checks your cat for feline heartworms and feline immunodeficiency virus. Your cat should be tested if it is: a new cat or kitten whose mother has not previously been tested or has an unknown health history; a cat with a chronic or unresponsive illness that suggests a compromised immune system; a cat that has experienced a bite wound or abscess.

**Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP)** is a viral disease which is progressive and leads to death. It is seen most commonly in young adult cats. Diagnostic testing for FIP is difficult, but a vaccination is available. Although the risk of infection is low compared to other feline diseases, no cure exists.

**Rabies** vaccine is required by law because it is a fatal disease that can be transmitted to humans and has no cure. The vaccine is given between 12 and 16 weeks of age and then boosted in one year, after which time boosters are given every three years.

