

About Your New Cat



**Oklahoma City
Animal Welfare**



Bringing Your New Pet Home

Dear New Adopting Family,

Thank you so much for opening your heart and your home to a wonderful pet from Oklahoma City Animal Welfare (OKCAW). We hope that this will be the beginning of a long and happy life together. We have the following suggestions to help ensure things start off smoothly with your new pet. If you have any further questions, please visit us at www.okc.gov/animalwelfare.

Although you will be very excited to bring your new pet home and introduce them to the family right away, it is strongly recommended that you keep your new cat away from other pets in the household for the first two weeks. This is important to allow them to slowly get to know each other and develop a friendly relationship. It is also very important to minimize the chances of your current pets catching a cold or an infection from your new pet, even if everyone appears healthy.

Every cat that comes to the OKCAW shelter is given one or more vaccines to help protect them from several different common illnesses, including the 3-in-1 FVRCP and rabies (if age appropriate) vaccines. Vaccines work by stimulating a protective response by the animal's immune system, but it may take 5 to 7 days until an animal is adequately protected. Vaccines are critical in minimizing the risk of disease, but they are not a guarantee and do not provide 100% protection. Some animals arrive at our shelter already sick, or have been exposed to disease but are not yet showing signs that they are ill. In these cases, the vaccine will not be able to cure or prevent the illness. Underage animals aren't adequately protected until a services of vaccines are given.

Please make an appointment with a veterinarian to have your new pet examined within the first 10 days following adoption. You may use the complimentary list of participating veterinary facilities or, at your own expense, make an appointment with a different veterinarian of your choosing. It is very important to schedule this initial exam even if your pet appears to be healthy so that you can discuss a wellness plan that is specifically designed for your pet, including which vaccinations he or she may need and any preventative medicines that are recommended.

Your new pet was also dewormed and given flea/tick treatment. Your adoption contract will indicate what treatment has been done.

You will notice that your pet may have a tattoo on the inside of his/her leg (if already sterilized at the time they came into the shelter, they will not have a tattoo). This number is a permanent identification and is connected to a number in our system. If he returns to our care, we hope to be able to contact you to reclaim your pet. This is only applicable if you keep the information in our system updated so please let us know if you move or obtain a new phone number. We also recommend that you get your pet microchipped and always have a collar and tag with your contact information on your pets neck. It is required by OKC law that your pet has a current rabies vaccination and that he/she wears the rabies tag affixed to his collar at all times.

Ask for assistance if you have questions or concerns about your new pet. In addition to consulting with your veterinarian, please contact New Leash on Life if you have questions about your new pet's behavior, introducing them to your family, or any other concerns. In many cases, they will be able to provide you with helpful information or even other resources, such as training classes, to help address your concerns and keep your new pet happy and healthy at home with you. New Leash on Life volunteers may be reached by calling 405-604-0519.

Sincerely,
Oklahoma City Animal Welfare

Common Infectious Diseases in Cats

OKCAW animals arrive at our shelter as strays or owner surrenders. We do not always know their medical or behavioral history and, as indicated in the contract you signed, we cannot guarantee their health or temperament. Below is a list of common or serious diseases that may be found in shelter cats with unknown medical histories. If you see any of the symptoms below, please contact a veterinarian.

Panleukopenia

Symptoms: vomiting, diarrhea, high fever, loss of appetite.

Transmission: direct or indirect contact with fecal matter, seen in unvaccinated cats and kittens, but most common in kittens less than 6 months of age.

Treatment: adults may have relatively mild disease, but kittens are more likely to develop severe and often fatal infections. Aggressive intensive care treatment including IV fluids and antibiotics may be necessary.

Rhinotracheitis and Calici

Symptoms: sneezing, nasal discharge, red puffy eyes, ocular discharge.

Transmission: contact with saliva and respiratory secretions, direct cat-to-cat contact. Many cats have previously been exposed to the rhinotracheitis virus and develop latent infections that may be reactivated with stress.

Treatment: mild cases will typically resolve without treatment. More severely affected cats and kittens may require oral antibiotics, eye ointment, and fluids and nutritional support.

Fleas

Fleas are a problem that should be taken seriously. These tiny parasites feed off your pets, transmit many diseases and irritate the skin. Carefully check your cat once a week for fleas. If there are fleas on your cat, there may be fleas and flea eggs in your house. Consult your veterinarian. There are several new methods of flea control. You may need to use flea bombs or premise control sprays, and will need to treat all animals in your house. Make sure that any sprays, powders or shampoos you use are safe for all cats and that all products are compatible if used together. Cats die every year due to being treated improperly with flea control products.

Coccidiosis

Coccidia is a parasite that can cause disease most commonly in puppies and kittens less than 6 months of age and in adult animals whose immune system is suppressed. This can cause diarrhea with blood and mucus and may also cause vomiting, loss of appetite and dehydration. Coccidiosis can be treated effectively. Coccidia in cats and dogs cannot infect humans.

Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) and Feline immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) Infections

FeLV is a viral infection of cats. It is spread primarily in the saliva from cat to cat in close physical contact with each other or who share food and water bowls. It can also be spread through blood transfusions and in utero to kittens. FeLV infections can result in cancer and suppression of the immune system, leading to a variety of secondary infections. Sadly, there is no effective treatment or cure for FeLV and most infections eventually become fatal.

FIV is also a viral infection of cats. It is spread primarily through deep bite wounds inflicted during fighting with other cats. It can also be spread through blood transfusions but is rarely spread from a queen to her kittens. FIV infections can result in an immunodeficiency syndrome similar to AIDS in people, but many cats will remain healthy and unaffected. As with FeLV, there is no cure for FIV and treatment is supportive.

OKCAW strongly recommends that you speak to your veterinarian and have your cat checked for these two infections particularly before you introduce your new pet to other cats.

Upper Respiratory Infections

Upper respiratory infections are common in cats that have spent time with other cats in close quarters (such as at a boarding facility or an animal shelter). Like the common cold in people, most upper respiratory infections are mild and will resolve with treatment in a short period of time, but it is important to have your pet seen by your veterinarian if you notice any coughing, sneezing, nasal discharge or red or runny eyes.

Ringworm

Ringworm is a fungal infection that can affect hair, skin and nails of cats and dogs. It is the most common contagious skin infection in cats. Ringworms can be transmitted through direct contact with fungal spores. It can be transmitted to other animals and humans.

Ear Mites

These tiny parasites are common in cats, and can be transmitted from cat to cat. If your cat is scratching at his or her ears, shaking his or her head, or has dark brown or black gritty debris in the ears, he or she may have ear mites. You will need to call for a veterinary appointment, as your cats ears will need to be thoroughly cleaned before medication is dispensed. Ear mites are contagious to other pets in the household.

Please remember to utilize your free 10-day wellness exam so you can address any of your new pet's medical concerns.

Vaccination(s) Your New Pet Received While at OKCAW's Animal Shelter

Cats are given a 3-in-1 FVRCP vaccination, commonly known as the "distemper shot." This includes rhinotracheitis and calici viruses, which are common causes of upper respiratory infections, and panleukopenia.

OKC law requires that all animals 4 months of age and older receive a yearly rabies vaccination.

Since OKCAW does not have vaccination histories on many of the animals that come into the shelter, we recommend that all adult animals receive a booster 2 to 4 weeks after the vaccine(s) were administered at the shelter. The date of vaccination is listed on the medical history you received with your adoption contract.

OKCAW recommends that kittens less than 16 weeks of age receive a booster vaccination every 2 to 4 weeks, until they are at least 16 weeks of age.

All booster shots are the financial responsibility of the new pet owner and should be arranged through your regular veterinarian. Speak to your veterinarian about a yearly vaccination schedule.

Spaying/Neutering Your Cat

Your new pet has been spayed or neutered prior to adoption. Females should be spayed before they become sexually mature, before reaching 4 to 6 months of age. Spaying a female (removing the ovaries and uterus) helps prevent breast cancer, which can be fatal 50% of the time. It also helps prevent pyometra (uterine infection), a very serious problem in older females that must be treated with surgery and intensive medical care. Spaying also prevents unwanted animals from being born.

Neutering a male (removing the testicles) can reduce marking, decrease the urge to escape outside to looking for a mate and reduce fighting between males.

OKCAW has a free spay/neuter program for any pet whose owner resides in Oklahoma City. If you have a friend or family member with a pet that needs sterilization or another pet in your home that is unsterilized, please call 405-297-3100 to take advantage of the program.

Spay/Neuter Release Instructions

All animals are spayed or neutered prior to being adopted. The instructions below may or may not apply, depending on when your animal was sterilized. Your adoption contract will indicate a date of sterilization.

1. Your pet has had general anesthesia today or recently and may be unsteady on his or her feet this evening. Restrict access to stairs and high furniture to avoid any accidental falls or injuries.
2. Please provide your pet with fresh, clean water. You can offer them a small meal in the evening, and then begin feeding normally in the morning. Anesthesia can make pets nauseous, so do not offer a large meal. If your pet vomits, do not offer them more food until the following morning.
3. Watch your pet for any vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, or decreased energy level. Some pets may vomit the evening of surgery but this should not continue. If you notice any of these signs or other signs of illness, please make an appointment to have your pet seen by a veterinarian. You may use the exam certificate provided to you at the time of adoption for a free office call at a participating veterinary clinic within 10 days of adoption.
4. Do not allow your pet to lick or scratch the incision site. If your pet is bothering his or her incision, you may need to get an Elizabethan collar for them. For female cats, the incision will be on the ventral abdomen (belly). For male cats, the incision will be in between their hind legs near the belly.
5. Check the incision daily; it should be clean, dry and not have any areas that appear to be open or gaping. If you notice any discharge, heat, swelling or redness, you should have your pet seen by a veterinarian. You may use the exam certificate provided to you at the time of adoption for a free office call at a participating veterinary clinic.
6. Unless otherwise noted, the stitches are absorbable and do not need to be removed.
7. Do not bathe or groom your pet for 10 days from the spay/neuter date, or allow him or her to go swimming.
8. Your pet's exercise should be restricted for 7-10 days from the spay/neuter date to allow him or her to heal. Running, jumping and rough play should not be permitted during this time.
9. If your pet has been sent home with medication, be sure to follow all directions on the label. Give the medication for the entire time indicated by the instructions, even if your pet does not appear to be sick.

General Cat Care

Before you bring your cat home, you will need: cat food, food dish, water bowl, interactive toys, brush, comb, safety cat collar, scratching post, ID tags, a litter box and kitty litter.

Feeding

You should feed your cat a high-quality cat or kitten food appropriate for his or her life stage and breed; food should be offered 1 to 4 times a day as appropriate for your pet. Provide fresh, clean water at all times and be sure to wash and refill the water bowls daily.

You can either feed specific meals, throwing away any left-over canned food after 30 minutes, or free-feed dry food (keeping food out at all times). All cats should be fed a diet specific to their life stage and health.

Some kittens will be hesitant to eat kitten food. In these cases, you can feed them kitten milk replacer or human baby food for a short period of time. Baby food should be a turkey or chicken variety and must not have any onions, garlic or powders made from them listed in the ingredients as that can make cats very ill. Gradually mix in increasing amounts of kitten food to the milk replacer or baby food over a few days' time until your pet is eating kitten food only. Avoid offering cow's milk as it can cause diarrhea in cats and kittens.

Diarrhea is common in newly adopted pets. This can be the result of a variety of cause, including stress, diet change, parasites, or even viral or bacterial infections. It can also be helpful to gradually change your pet's food over to the new diet you choose to feed over 5 to 7 days by mixing in small but increasing amounts of the new food. If you do notice that your pet is having diarrhea, please make an appointment to have him or her seen by your veterinarian for exam and, if needed, for testing to determine the underlying cause(s).

Grooming

Most cats stay relatively clean and rarely need a bath, but they do need to be brushed and combed. Frequent brushing helps keep your cat's coat clean, reduces the amount of shedding and cuts down on the incidence of hairballs. Regular brushing is particularly important for cats with longer coats.

Handling

To pick up your cat, place one hand behind the front legs and another under the hindquarters. Lift gently. Never pick up a cat by the scruff of the neck (nape of the neck behind the ears) or by the front legs without supporting the rear end.

Housing

Please keep your cat indoors. If your companion animal is allowed outside, he or she may contract diseases, get fleas or other parasites, become lost, get hit by a car or hurt in a fight or be poisoned. Cats should have a clean, dry place of their own in the house. Line your cat's bed with a soft, warm blanket or towel. Be sure to wash the bedding regularly.

Identification

Whether or not your cat is permitted outdoors, your cat needs to wear a safety collar and ID tag. A safety collar with an elastic panel will allow your cat to break loose if the collar gets caught on something. An ID tag and implanted microchip can help ensure that your cat is returned if he or she becomes lost.

Litter Box

All cats need access to at least one litter box, which should be placed in a quiet, accessible location. A bathroom or utility room is a good place for your cat's box. In a multi-level home, one box per floor and at least one box per cat are recommended. Avoid moving the box unless absolutely necessary; then, do so slowly, a few inches a day. Most cats won't use a messy, smelly litter box. Scoop solids out of the box at least once a day. Dump everything, wash with a mild detergent (don't use ammonia) and refill at least once a week for clay litter, but less frequently if using clumping litter. Don't use deodorants or scents in the litter or litter box (especially avoid lemon scent) as they can be offensive or even toxic to cats.

Play

Cats delight in stalking imaginary prey. The best toys are those that can be made to jump and dance around and look alive. Your cat will act out her predator role by pouncing on toys instead of people's ankles. Don't use your hands or fingers as play objects with kittens. This type of play may cause a biting and scratching problem to develop as your kitten matures.

Scratching

Provide your cat with a sturdy scratching post, at least 3 feet high, which allows the cat to stretch completely when scratching. It should also be stable enough that it won't wobble when being used. It should be covered with rough material such as sisal, burlap or tree bark to further prevent household destruction. Cats also like scratching pads. To train a cat to use a post or a pad, rub your hands on the scratching surface and then gently rub the kitty's paws on the surface. When the cat starts to scratch furniture or rugs, gently say no and lure her over to the scratching post. Praise your cat for using the scratching post or pad. A sprinkle of catnip once or twice a month will keep your cat interested in it.

Health

Your cat should see a veterinarian at least once a year for an examination and immediately if your she is sick or injured. Your veterinarian will recommend which vaccines and other preventative medicines may be necessary for your cat.

Medicines and Poisons

Cats are very sensitive to a number of common medications, products, and plants commonly found in and around the home. For example, Tylenol® is fatal for cats and giving aspirin to your cat can result in severe illness or even death. Anti-freeze, rodenticides (rat poison), and many cleaning products are highly poisonous and should be kept away from your pet at all times. Many common household plants can cause illness and sometimes death in cats who inadvertently ingest them.

You should never give any medication to your cat or kitten unless it is under the supervision of a veterinarian. If you suspect that your cat or kitten may have ingested a poisonous substance or are unsure if a product he or she has eaten is poisonous, call your veterinarian or the National Animal Poison Control Center immediately at (888) 426-4435 for information and instructions on what to do (note that a consultation fee may apply). Further information regarding poisons can be found at their website: <http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control/>.



**Oklahoma City Animal
Welfare Division
2811 SE 29th Street
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www.okc.gov/animalwelfare**

Our programs include:

Animal Sheltering

Adoptions

Lost and Found

Community Programs include:

Pet Food Bank

Free Spay/Neuter for OKC Residents

Community Cat Program

Field Services:

Law Enforcement

Animal Cruelty

Animal Rescue

Ways to Give and Volunteer for OKC Animal Welfare: There are many ways to continue to help the homeless animals in OKC. If interested in learning more about how you can get involved, please visit www.okc.gov/animalwelfare for more information on our Donation and Volunteer programs.