

ARKLE Veterinary Care, LLC

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ESSENTIAL PET CAT CARE

- A. Cats are usually old enough to go to a new home by 5-6 weeks of age, when they are eating, drinking and eliminating on their own without any help from their mother. If your new cat is younger than this, or does not immediately show that it knows how to eat, drink and eliminate on it's own, you will need additional care recommendations from your veterinarian after they examine your new pet.
- B. Adequate **water** supply for all cats present. It is preferable, but not essential, to have at least 2 bowls or sources if you have more than one cat. Water containers need to be emptied, cleaned and refilled with fresh, clean water daily.
- C. Adequate **food** for all cats present. It is strongly recommended to have a separate food dish or bowl for each cat. Dishes or bowls need to be cleaned at least once a day. Food must be labeled with "nutritionally complete" for your cat's stage of life (kitten, adult, pregnant, lactating) as proven in AAFCO feeding trials. Chemical analysis without feeding trials does not assure that your pet can absorb all needed nutrients from the food. Leaving food out all the time promotes an overweight pet and makes it impossible for you to know if your pet's appetite has changed recently. Cats do best on frequent, small meals but most cats over 12 weeks old are fine if fed twice daily.
- D. Adequate size and number of **litterboxes** with easy access for cats and difficult or impossible access for dogs. This means scooping the litterboxes & removing solids once a day; completely emptying, cleaning and replacing fresh litter weekly (clay based litter) or monthly (clumping type litter), and providing 1 more litter box than there are cats in the house. {Example: 1-2 clean litterboxes for 1 cat, 3 for two cats, 4 for three cats, etc.}. The litterboxes need to be at least as wide as the cat is long, and 1.5 times the length of your biggest cat's body. Covered litter boxes need to be scooped more often than uncovered, as trapping the odor in the box encourages the cat to eliminate somewhere that smells better, like outside of the box.
- E. Adequate **parasite prevention and control**. This means flea control and intestinal parasite testing and elimination as recommended by your veterinarian and CDC for your cat's specific environment and condition. Heartworm prevention is also recommended year round for cats, regardless of whether they go outside or not.
- F. Adequate level of **mental stimulation & exercise** daily. Cats need to be brushed, petted and encouraged to play on a daily basis to maintain physical and mental health.
- G. Annual **physical examination** by a veterinarian, and **preventative health care** (tests, vaccinations, medications) as recommended at the time of examination. Pets over 7 years of age or with known medical problems need to be examined more often. Your veterinarian can give you specific recommendations for your pet(s).