

Ensure Your Cats Health During Kitten Season

Early detection of dangerous diseases is a cats best chance for a long, healthy life.

One in three U.S. households owns at least one cat, making cats the most popular pet in America. According to the Humane Society of the United States, cats outnumber dogs by more than 16 million in the United States, with over 90 million cats as pets.

And with kitten season approaching, even more people will be welcoming new feline friends into their lives, making this the most important time of year to ensure new kittens get off to a healthy start.

New cat owners should work with their veterinarians to establish a wellness plan that is right for their kitten. Wellness check-ups should include vaccinations, screening for parasites, and testing for dangerous diseases such as feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline leukemia virus (FeLV).

The easiest way for a person to help ensure a long, healthy life for their cat is to implement a total wellness program as early as possible and to stick to it throughout their cats life, explained Lynn Buzhardt, DVM, a national veterinary expert.

Early detection is key when it comes to deadly diseases like FIV and FeLV, so testing when you first get your kitten is very important. If we know a cat has a serious disease, we can implement routine follow-up visits to help that kitty live a long, healthy life, Buzhardt said.

Its estimated that 31 million cats in the United States are at risk for FIV and FeLV. And because cats infected with these diseases often show no visible symptoms especially young kittens many cat owners are unaware their cat has been exposed. Testing is the only way to tell if your pet has FIV or FeLV.

These diseases are transferred from cat to cat so its especially important to have new kittens and strays tested before bringing them into a home that already has cats.

The American Veterinary Medical Association recommends that cat owners visit their veterinarians twice a year. For more information regarding FIV and FeLV, cat owners should contact their veterinarian.

The American Association of Feline Practitioners also provides information about FIV and FeLV online at www.fivetest.com/kitten. Posted: April 25, 2006, 5:00 a.m. EST