Top 10 Cat Care FAQs

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Over the years we've fielded numerous calls and emails about the best ways to care for our cat companions. Here are some of our most commonly asked questions.

1 What are the dangers of fleas and ticks?

Fleas can cause medical problems in pets, including flea allergy dermatitis (FAD), tapeworms, hair loss due to scratching, and secondary skin irritations. In large numbers, fleas can cause life-threatening anemia from blood loss, especially in kittens and puppies. Ticks also transmit serious diseases, including Lyme Disease, Ehrlichiosis, and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. Use a monthly topical, such as Frontline® Plus Flea & Tick Control for Cats, to help protect your cat from fleas and ticks.

2 How can I control my cat's shedding?

Keep your cat's skin and coat healthy to help reduce problem shedding. First, feed a high quality diet and use a fatty acid-rich supplement like our Vitacaps®. Second, brush your cat's coat daily. Finally, remove shed hair from your home as soon as possible by washing furniture throws, using tape rollers, and frequently vacuuming.

3 How does my pet become infected with heartworm?

Mosquitoes become infected with tiny immature forms of the heartworm, called microfilariae, when they bite an infected animal. Inside the mosquito, the microfilariae develop into larvae. When an infected mosquito bites a new animal, these larvae enter into the new animal's body, where they grow, eventually migrate to the heart, mate, and produce more microfilariae. Help prevent heartworm with a monthly use of Heartgard® Chewables for cats.

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4 What causes the crumbly black discharge in my new kitten's ears?

Your kitten probably has an ear mite infestation. Ear mites are very common, but serious. Left untreated, they can severely damage the ear canals and eardrum and cause permanent hearing loss. Our Ear-Rite® Miticide uses pyrethrins to safely kill these minute parasites.

5 What are the benefits of premium brands of cat food?

Premium cat foods, such as our Signature Series® Cat Food, use higher-quality ingredients from sources with higher biological values. Because better-quality ingredients mean better digestibility, your cat does not need to eat as much and she produces less waste (which means less to clean out of the litter box).

6 How often should I brush my cat's teeth?

We recommend daily dental care to promote healthy teeth and gums. The key is to remove plaque before it has time to mineralize. To simplify the process, use our Dental Kit. While cleaning, check for any abnormalities or problems with your cat's teeth or gums.

7 How can I stop my cat from jumping on the kitchen counter or dining room table?

Eliminate the reward of counter cruising to help stop this behavior. Confine your cat to a different room while you prepare meals and clear counters of mail, car keys, and other objects with which she can play. Then use remote correction to help stop this behavior, which safely corrects your cat's actions without her associating the correction with you. Useful remote correction tools include textured or electronic pulse mats, motion-activated sprays or buzzers, and double-sided tape.

8 Why does my male cat spray?

Urine spraying is a normal, innate territory-marking behavior that has nothing to do with your cat's sanitation. Most common in non-neutered males and in multiple cat households, spraying is your cat's way of identifying territory or covering the scent of other cats. Spaying/neutering your cat, preferably before six months of age, helps stop spraying. Comfort Zone® with Feliway® Spray also helps reduce your cat's anxiety and fear, which can cause him to spray.

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9 What is the best way to control litter box odors?

Scrupulously clean litter boxes have no smell. The best and healthiest way to control litter box odors is to keep it clean. This entails daily scooping of urine and waste clumps and at least weekly changing of the entire litter contents and any litter pan liners. To simplify the process, use an automatic litter box.

10 Why should I clean around my cat's eyes?

It is important to remove dirt and dust from around your cat's external eye area. Otherwise, these pollutants can work their way into your cat's eyes, causing discomfort and risk of infection. An added benefit to frequent external eye cleanings is that it also helps prevent unsightly tear stains. To best clean around your cat's eyes, use our Eye Clens® Wash or Pads.

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