



YOUR CAT'S HEALTH, OUR PASSION • VOLUME 3, ISSUE 12 • DECEMBER 2011 NEWSLETTER

## FELINE GESTATION AND PREGNANCY

Female felines have “heat cycles” (estrus cycles) almost year-round, though typically the high season for breeding is March through September. Cats are polyestrous, meaning they can go into heat many times during a single breeding season. They are also “long day breeders,” needing longer periods of daylight to stimulate their cycles. Female cats spontaneously ovulate, so they release multiple eggs each time they are stimulated; this means they can mate with more than one male (superfecundation) to produce a very diverse group of kittens.

Heat cycles may begin as early as 4 months of age and will continue until the kitty is spayed. The cycles vary in length, ranging from days to weeks, and typically repeat every 2 to 3 weeks. Typical symptoms include yowling, hissing, purring, and excessive posturing (hind area in the air).

While there may be nothing cuter than a furry kitten, there are a number of reasons to “fix” your kitty. Feline overpopulation and its accompanying high euthanasia rate is a very important issue, both with companion and feral cats. From a medical standpoint, unspayed and unneutered pets are at higher risk for certain cancers of the reproductive system. And spaying/neutering can help prevent adverse behaviors such as spraying or aggressive tendencies.

It is very important to have your female cat spayed (and male cat neutered) when they are 5 to 6 months old. It is crucial to allow them to have the time to grow to their fullest potential to prevent stunting growth, but once of age, they should be spayed or neutered without delay.

If your female kitty does get out and about during her fertile time and winds up pregnant, it's important to carefully monitor her

pregnancy progression, or decide early on if you are going to move forward with spaying her and aborting (this is usually done early on, if at all). A cat's gestation period is approximately 52 to 64 days. Usually between days 25 to 30, your veterinarian may be able to palpate or visualize embryos on ultrasound; it may be difficult to do so much earlier than this.

If your pregnant kitty is going to go full term, you do need to make sure your house and her birthing suite/recovery area are calm and quiet. Be sure to supply nesting materials, such as towels, boxes, soft blankets, etc. Having the potty box, food, and water nearby is also beneficial. Feeding mom rich, high-nutrient food (such as kitten food) while she's pregnant and nursing may be advisable.

When it's time for the kittens to make their appearance, the mother typically gives birth to the first kitten within one hour after labor commences. It can take anywhere from minutes to an hour for each kitten thereafter. Most females deliver all of their kittens between 2 to 6 hours. If mom is in labor for longer than 7 hours, it's important to seek medical attention at once; there are potential complications with any pregnancy. And always call us if you have any questions or concerns.

## FELINE UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS

The cold winter months are here again, and just like you, your kitty may be more susceptible to seasonal upper respiratory illness. While a few sneezes may not be cause for alarm, if your kitty has ongoing sneezing, coughing, or wheezing, or if you see nasal discharge or runny eyes, it's a good idea to bring your kitty in for a checkup.

If left untreated, an upper respiratory infection may progress to the point that your kitty is too sick to eat or drink, or becomes so congested that you'll see open-mouth breathing. Your kitty may also run a high fever (extreme listlessness may be one indicator). In these instances, hospitalization may be required to help your kitty get past the worst of the infection.

Fortunately, if caught early enough, most upper respiratory infections can be addressed with a round of antibiotics that you give at home. In some cases, nose drops, supplements, or a humidifier may also be recommended. If your kitty is experiencing any of the signs or symptoms noted above, please call us.

## 3RD ANNUAL PET FOOD DRIVE

On November 19, the Sacramento Cat Hospital hosted its third annual pet food drive benefiting Titanic's Pantry (the Sacramento Pet Food Bank). More than 3500 pounds of cat and dog food was collected, along with collars, leashes, harnesses, blankets and bedding, toys, carriers, cat litter and litter pans, brushes and combs, and scratching posts.

To see photos from the event, please visit our Facebook page. Thanks to everyone who helped make a difference for pets in need!

## DECEMBER SPECIAL OFFER FOR OUR READERS

Through December 31, your female kitty will receive **\$20 off the regular cost of a routine spay** procedure, and your male kitty will receive **\$10 off the regular cost of a routine neuter** procedure. Please ask us for more information.

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