



Noah's Ark Companion Animal Hospital

Kitty 101

Fundamentals for a Healthy Feline

Should you be worried about feline heartworm disease?

Cats can get heartworm disease. However, it's very uncommon.

Heartworm in cats occurs at about 10% the rate that it does in dogs, so there's a fairly low prevalence of feline heartworm disease.

To put it in perspective, Noah's Ark tests at least 1,000 dogs each year for heartworm disease. Of those 1,000 tests, we diagnose 10-15 cases of heartworm disease in dogs per year.

Given that cats only contract heartworm 10% as often as dogs, if we tested every cat that visited we'd expect to find less than 1 case per year.

And the plot thickens...the test only detects heartworm antibodies, which does not necessarily confirm the presence of actual heartworms.

Noah's Ark does not perform routine testing for heartworm disease in cats because the prevalence is so low, but we do want you to be aware that a heartworm preventative is available.

Even though it's highly unlikely your cat will develop heartworm disease, if you want to be 100% sure, you can purchase Heartgard (a heartworm preventative) through our online pharmacy and administer it monthly.

Is it really necessary to give my cat a flea and tick preventative?

YES! Fleas and ticks are present twelve months out of the year in our area!

Fleas and ticks are a menace to you and your pets. We urge you to use monthly prevention year round. Our preferred method for flea and tick prevention is Frontline Tritak or Nexgard. We'll help you decide which is best for your furry family.

And don't be fooled! Some of the worst home infestations we see each year are in homes with indoor-only cats.

Don't wait until you see fleas to treat!

By the time you see fleas you have an infestation. And don't be fooled by claims of low internet pricing. All products sold at Noah's Ark are very competitively priced and come with expert advice and a money back guarantee! Also avoid products sold over the counter in the "big box" stores. They're often just a waste of money because they just don't work. Come see us first, we're flea experts!

Are you thinking inside the (litter) box?

A few simple steps can make your cat a litter box champ!

1. **Make it easy.** Provide one box for each cat PLUS one. Make them easily accessible.
2. **Size matters.** Litter boxes should be at least one and a half times as long as the cat. And don't forget, some cats like a little privacy!
3. **Keep it clean.** Most cats like the maid to come at least once a day, so get in the habit of scooping daily. In case of an accident make sure you completely clean it AND eliminate the smell of urine so that it's not used again as a toilet. Noah's Ark has a great product called **Urine Off** and it works wonders.
4. **Have a feline felon?** Repeat litter box offenders may have medical issues or emotional stresses causing their accidents. Schedule an appointment at Noah's Ark for help with any medical or behavior concerns you may have about your furry friends. We're here to help you and your pets be happy and healthy!



Adult cats should not weigh more than 12 pounds. If yours does, it's time to take action.

Why, you ask? Here are the top 5 troublemakers for our feline patients:

1. Obesity
2. Kidney failure (the primary cause of early death in domestic cats)
3. Diabetes
4. Male cats with urinary obstructions
5. Chronic bladder irritation—often leading to litter box issues (the most common behavioral problem we see)

Dry food is often to blame for ALL of these health issues. There are TWO primary reasons for this:

1. Cats seldom drink enough water, and dry food is...dry

Cats evolved in the desert, and thus have a very low natural thirst drive. Before domestication, they got water by consuming their prey. Fresh diets—whether raw meat, canned, or prey caught by your hunting cats—have 70-75% water.

Dry cat food has about 10% moisture, and it puts your cat into a chronically dehydrated state. Their urine becomes very concentrated and that is what causes the rampant urinary health issues we see in cats who love their kibble.

Cats must consume TWICE as much water as dry food to get close to 70% moisture. So in other words, **if you feed ½ cup of dry food, your cat must drink at least 1 cup of water to remain properly hydrated.** Even if your cat seems to drink a lot of water, it's likely not even close to the amount required to keep urine dilute enough to avoid problems. Noah's Ark loves using water fountains, which can encourage cats to drink more water than they naturally would. We have a great selection of water fountains for sale at the Ark

2. Cats are true carnivores, and don't require carbohydrates, but dry food is loaded with them.

The majority of the calories in dry food diets are provided as CARBOHYDRATES, which are a cheap source of energy. Cats inevitably become obese on carbohydrate rich diets. Also like us, their obesity leads to diabetes. Diabetes is difficult and expensive to control in cats.

Cats in particular become very addicted to the salt, sugar, and flavorings present in commercial foods. Manufacturers try hard to get your kitties "hooked" so that they'll only eat their brand of food.

It's really hard to get weight off cats when they're eating a diet of primarily "kibble" or dry cat food. HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO IF YOUR CAT'S A KIBBLE JUNKIE:

FIRST, transition your cats to high quality canned cat food.

Visit these two websites for great advice on transitioning kibble lovers to wet food: www.feline-nutrition.org/nutrition and www.catinfo.org.

We have a handout at Noah's Ark that shows you how much it costs to feed a wide variety of high and low quality diets. You'll be surprised by some of the data, so stop by and pick one up!

If you're up for it, consider converting your cats to a raw, fresh meat diet. We are here to help you with that! Dawn's always available for diet consultations in person, or via email at dawntodd@noahsarkvet.us.

NEXT, plan a reasonable weight loss goal.

An average cat only requires 250 - 300 calories per day to maintain a healthy body weight.

Weight loss can only occur if fewer calories are consumed than "spent"—whether you're a cat, a dog, or a human. If you feed a cat 100 calories per day less than needed to maintain their current weight, it will still take **at least a month to lose a single pound**; but that's a perfectly fine rate of weight loss for cats.

Never put food out and let cats and dogs "free feed" or have access to food at all times...that nearly always leads to obesity.

FINALLY, get your fluffy feline off the sofa! Our domestic kitties need to eat less AND exercise more.

In the wild, cats expend lots of energy catching breakfast, lunch and dinner—those mice don't just walk up and volunteer their services!

Kitty feather wands, laser pointers, and chasing toys can all stimulate activity. Noah's Ark also carries the Fun Kitty Eggcresizer. Put some low calorie treats in and watch your cat move it around the floor, burning calories in order to get a yummy morsel!

AND REMEMBER, dry food DOES NOT help keep cats' or dogs' teeth shiny and white!

Many cats and dogs swallow their kibble whole, without even chewing it. IF they do chew, the kibble crumbles, mixes with saliva, and sticks to the gumline, helping to create tartar, not eliminate it. There is no truth to the myth that dry food keeps teeth cleaner.

Cats do suffer from dental disease and require annual examination of their teeth. Dental disease causes many other serious health problems.