

Caring for your cat

Methods of feeding:

There are basically three methods of feeding: free-choice, time-restricted and food-restricted. Feeding free-choice means that more food is given than your cat will eat; hence, it can eat as much as it wants, whenever it chooses. With time-restricted meal feeding, the cat is given more food than it will consume but only within a specific time, for example, 30 minutes. For food-restricted meal feeding, the cat is given less food than it would eat if the amount were not limited. Both types of restricted feeding are repeated once or twice a day.



Although free-choice feeding is more convenient for the owner and the cat will receive sufficient food, it is recommended to use restricted meal feeding to avoid over-feeding which could result in obesity and other health problems. Free choice feeding can be reserved for pregnant and nursing cats as they need at least 4 times the normal amount of calories.

Some nutritional tips

Remember that cats need a high protein diet. They require taurine which must be supplemented in their diet as inadequate supply of taurine results in central retinal degeneration and blindness. Arachidonic acid is necessary to maintain healthy-looking coat and skin. They also need the vitamins A, B (niacin) and B6.

Grooming your cat:

Regular grooming is essential to your cat's health and well-being. Regular combing and brushing keeps coat or hair shiny by stimulating the skin and allowing circulation of natural oils to the coat. Regular grooming is essential to your cat's health and well-being.

Basic grooming tools include brush for combing coat, chamois cloth, face cloth for cleaning eyes, etc, cotton wool for cleaning ears, and fine tooth comb for short-haired cats to smoothen coat and remove fleas and dirt. You can obtain all these from a pet store.

- It is better to spend a few minutes on a regular basis to groom your pet as animals get easily distracted.
- Comb carefully in the direction of hair growth to smooth the coat and remove any minor knots and tangles.
- For long-haired cats, first use a wide tooth comb followed by a fine tooth comb.
- After combing, use a shedding blade to remove any loose or dead hair in the coat.
- A chamois cloth can be used as a final brush for short-haired cats.
- Short-haired cats can be groomed about twice a week while long-haired cats can be groomed daily.
- It is advisable to keep to a routine schedule to avoid neglect.

Dental Care for your pet

Just like we have to care for our teeth and have annual check-ups at the dentist, proper dental care is necessary for our pet.

Oral hygiene should not be neglected as periodontal disease can affect cats and dogs of varying breed, gender and age. Periodontitis is a serious problem not only for humans but for pets too. Some of the symptoms are behaviour changes, excessive saliva, swollen or bleeding gums, loose teeth and difficulty in eating.

Accumulation of plaque which is made up of bacteria, proteins, sugars, white blood cells, minerals and water can result in the disease. This build up of plaque causes odour, pain, infection and becomes tartar which destroys the bone and ligament that support the tooth eventually leading to tooth loss.

To combat the above problems, therapeutic diets are best as they provide a gentle cleaning that is clinically proven to reduce plaque, stain and calculus, and maintain oral health.

Here are some more tips to promote good oral hygiene for your pet:

- Some owners brush their dog's teeth on a daily basis, to keep teeth clean and prevent odours.
- Feed them dry pet food rather than wet formula.
- Some toys, when chewed, also help reduce tartar, help massage gums and floss teeth. Always check with your veterinarian before buying these toys or other aids for your cat or dog.
- Take your pet for that long overdue dental scaling to remove stubborn stain and tartar build-up. What is dental scaling? It is a simple procedure whereby the pet will be placed under general anaesthetic and an overall cleaning and polishing of the teeth will be done.

Meanwhile, take your pet to the veterinarian for a dental check-up to avoid unnecessary problems later on.