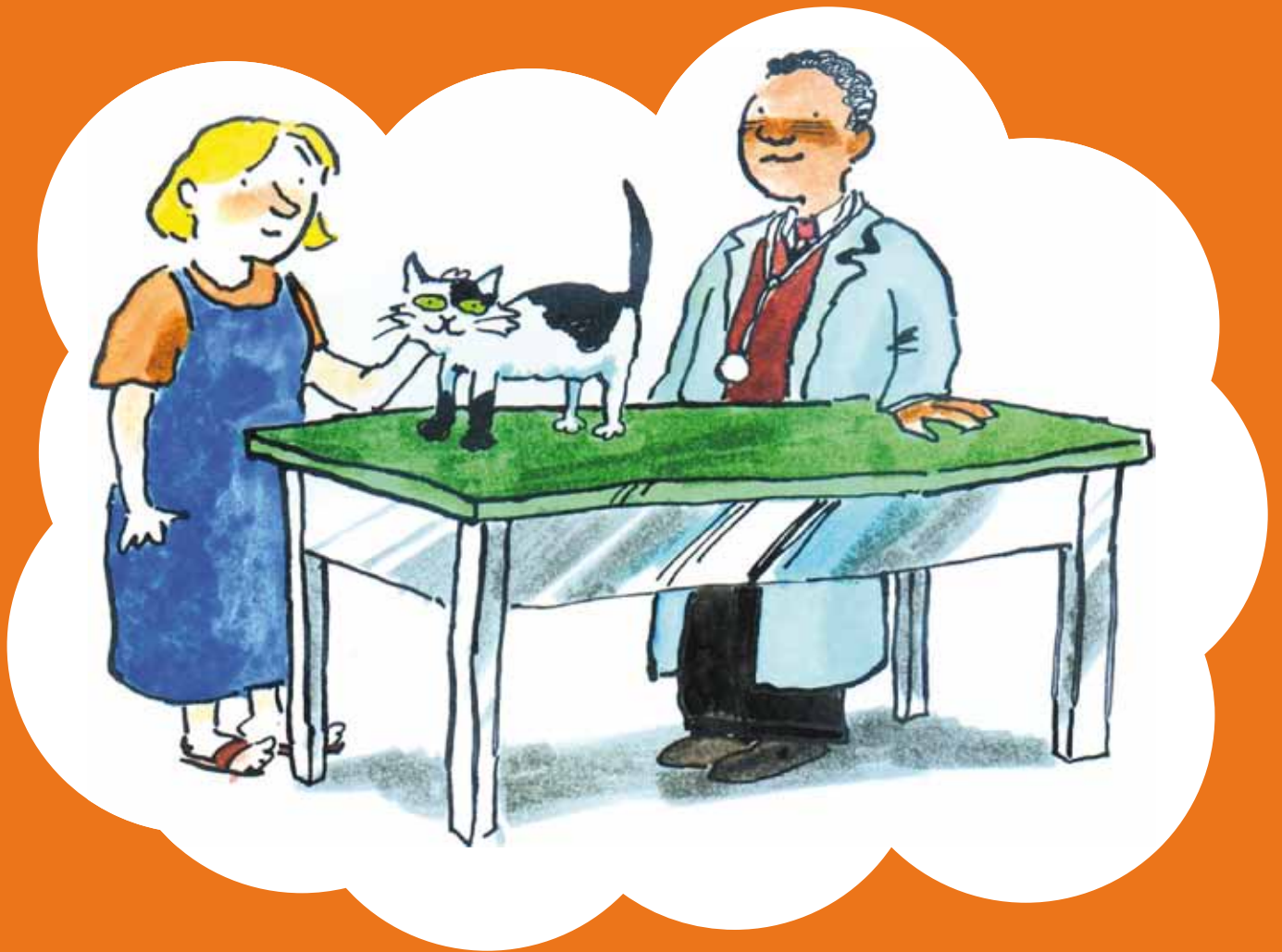


Caring for your cat



Cats were domesticated approximately 6,000 years after dogs, yet today there are nearly as many cats in the world as dogs. Although generally considered more independent than dogs, cats still need care and attention.

How to care for your cat

In order to stay healthy and happy, a cat needs:

- a balanced diet
- access to the outdoors
- a bed with a blanket
- companionship/to be played with
- veterinary care
- to be spayed/neutered
- to be looked after if you go away on holiday
- to be groomed regularly.



Where your cat lives

- A cat that lives outside needs shelter from hot or cold weather.
- Your cat should be able to go in and out of the house during the day.

Food and water

- A cat needs a balanced diet and will not thrive on scraps. Cats require a greater proportion of meat than dogs and need a higher level of protein and fat in their food.
- There are many types of cat food available that provide a well-balanced diet, including tinned or dried food.
- Your cat should be given fresh drinking water at all times, especially if you choose to feed dried products.
- Feed adult cats twice a day. Kittens, elderly cats and pregnant cats will need several smaller meals daily.
- Cats do not have to be hungry to hunt – it is something they do naturally, although toys may help fulfil this need.



Human company

- A cat is less demanding than a dog, for example they do not need to be taken for walks.
- Giving your cats attention will show them that you care.
- Cats are generally independent animals, and will seek companionship when they want it. For times when your cat might want to be alone, you should provide a quiet retreat.

Health

- Cats kept in dirty conditions can become infested with worms, ticks, fleas or lice.
- Sleeping and living areas should be kept clean and dry.
 - Healthy cats have glossy coats and clear eyes.
 - Ears and noses should be free from discharge, dirt and infection.
 - Teeth should be strong, white and not discoloured. Infected gums, if left untreated, can cause suffering.
- Ask your vet for advice.



Vaccinations

- Cats are vulnerable to many diseases that can be dangerous and costly to treat.
- Vaccination helps prevent illness and reduces the risk of infection to other cats.
- Cats need regular de-worming and flea treatments.



Grooming

- All cats, long or short-haired, benefit from regular grooming, and it provides an opportunity to check for parasites.
- Long-haired cats need special attention to keep their coats free of tangles.
- Grooming helps to get your cat used to being handled.



Breeding

- Every year hundreds of thousands of cats are destroyed because there are not enough suitable homes.
- Female cats can produce many kittens every year. In six years a pair of cats and their offspring can produce 420,000 cats.
- By constantly producing and rearing kittens, the health of a female cat can suffer.
- Pregnant and lactating female cats need extra food.
- Kittens generally suckle from their mothers for about three weeks, gradually starting to eat additional food.
- Female cats are naturally protective of their young so a quiet place should be provided for them.
- Kittens should stay with their mother until they are at least eight weeks old.
- **To prevent unwanted kittens, have your cat spayed/neutered – an operation performed by a vet.**



Spaying/neutering

- Modern veterinary equipment and drugs make surgery safe and recovery quick.
- Ask your vet when to have your cat spayed/neutered.
- Your cat does not need to have a litter before she is spayed.
- Early age neutering from eight weeks of age is now accepted as a positive action.
- Once a female cat has been spayed she will not come into season again and will not be bothered by male cats.
- Spaying females can reduce the risk of mammary tumours.
- Unneutered male cats have a habit of spraying an unpleasant smelling scent to mark their territories, which attracts females. Neutering reduces this behaviour.
- Neutering also reduces rival fighting amongst cats.
- Neutered cats are likely to be more affectionate and their ability to hunt is not affected.
- In stray and feral cats, ear tipping, or cutting off the tip of the left ear while the cat is still anaesthetised, is the universal way of identifying cats that have been spayed/neutered.



Consult your vet

Remember your vet can advise you on:

- the type/breed of cat that would best suit your life style and expectations
- diet • training your cat • treatment against parasites
- vaccination • spaying/neutering • any other health concerns.

Local Contact

WSPA International

5th Floor
222 Gray's Inn Road
London
WC1X 8HB

United Kingdom

T: +44 (0)20 7239 0500

F: +44 (0)20 7239 0654

E: wspa@wspa-international.org

W: www.wspa-international.org