

CIRCULAR A-380

MARCH 1962



Care of CATS

HOW TO KEEP TABBY - - -

- WORKING
- HEALTHY

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Care of CATS

HEALTHY CATS are useful workers on the farm and valued as pets by most families, town or country. Their health depends on the attention and care of their owners.

A healthy cat has clear eyes, a clean skin, smooth, glossy haircoat, and eats with relish. Any deviation from this condition calls for an examination by a veterinarian to set things right.

Feline Distemper

Although cats have few ills, one is an extremely serious problem. Feline distemper has left many farmers and homes without a single cat and the virus seems to linger and prevent restocking. Feline distemper also is known as panleucopenia or feline infectious enteritis.

Distemper in cats is completely different from distemper in dogs and one species does not catch the disease from the other.

Feline distemper is caused by a highly contagious virus. All cats are susceptible except those few that have managed to live through an attack of the disease and are permanently immune. A cat usually catches feline distemper from another cat sick of the disease. However, so hardy and persistent is the virus that even persons or things that have been in contact with a sick cat may carry infection.

After a susceptible cat has contact with the virus there is a delay of 5 or 6 days while the disease is "incubating". Then, suddenly, the cat is acutely ill. The appetite is diminished. Water or food, if taken, is often vomited. The haircoat is rough

and dry. The cat does not like to move and sits hovered over a food dish. When this occurs CALL OR SEE YOUR VETERINARIAN.

Modern veterinary medicine has done much to lower the death rate of feline distemper. If your pet sickens, hope is not to be entirely lost. Antibiotics, serum and proper nursing care can return many otherwise doomed cats to health. However, a more satisfactory approach to the problem is vaccination.

Rabies is infrequently found in cats. This disease is well described in NDSU Extension Service circular A-358.

INFECTIOUS FELINE ANEMIA is a relatively unknown disease found in cats. It seems to be increasing although this may be due to improved methods of detecting the disease. Fortunately, it is not often fatal.

Prevent Feline Distemper

An effective vaccine is available to prevent feline distemper. This is so safe, so easily given, that the house pet, the farm mouser, the valuable breeder, should be vaccinated BEFORE feline distemper strikes.

Kittens are most susceptible to the disease. It is safest to have them vaccinated shortly after weaning. Veterinarians have the necessary vaccine or can secure it.

Little value can be expected from vaccination of a cat that already has the disease or one that has been exposed to infection. The disease works faster than the vaccine can build its immunity. Remember, the vaccine is for healthy, unexposed kittens or cats.

Nutrition

House cats are fastidious in their diets and likely to become excessively selective. A monotonous diet may please the cat but sooner or later deficiency signs may appear. The hair-coat becomes rough and lusterless, the cat loses its appetite, becomes thin and eventually dies.

Vitamin E is important in cat nutrition. Most of the stores now have many cat foods that are properly fortified. The veterinarian has a supply of special cat food as well as vitamins or can get some for you shortly.

Have fresh water available to your cat at all times. Remember, cats can get just as thirsty as humans.

General Care

Accumulations of hair in the stomach (hairballs) may cause digestive disturbances. Longhaired cats especially are susceptible. Regular brushing of the coat is an excellent preventive measure. So is an occasional pea-sized dose of petrolatum or a similar amount of heavy mineral oil. Digestive troubles need the expert attention of a veterinarian. Do not delay if vomiting, continued loss of appetite, or diarrhea appears.

Worms afflict many cats and especially kittens. Certain drugs are effective if the kitten is otherwise healthy and the dose is correct. It is best to get the advice of your veterinarian about worming.

Cats do sometimes have external parasites. These can easily be controlled by applying a flea and louse powder. Be sure the one you select is suitable for cats and use it sparingly. Your veterinarian will know which is satisfactory. If your cat begins to shake its head, or paw at its ears, it may have ear mites -- tiny parasites infesting the ear canals. These mites are a special problem requiring a specific treatment.

A cat's hide is tough and difficult to pierce. However, if this happens, as in a fight, there is little resistance to infection. If a cat appears listless and bears evidence of wounds, do not delay your visit to a veterinarian.

If your cat develops bald spots it is time to see a veterinarian. This may be ringworm or mange, contagious to other cats or to humans as well. Modern treatments are convenient and efficient.

If your cat is kept as a house pet it is well to consider having it neutered by a veterinarian. A female can best be spayed at 4 to 6 months and a male castrated at the same age. However, both sexes can be operated on safely when older.

Baths for cats are emergency measures at the best. Cats take care of their coats very well and are nearly free of odors. For cats that are house pets, to prevent the damage of rugs, furniture, etc., the veterinarians have a simple painless declawing operation they will perform.