

Managing pets' needs over their **lifetime**



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The “Happy Pet Path” — Managing pets’ needs over their **lifetime**



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What's the deal with all these tests?

Don't play games with your pet's health. Here's a quick look at the tests we recommend—and why they're so important.

People often ask, "Why do you want to run all these tests?"

Each test we recommend has a purpose. Animals can't tell us their history or explain their symptoms. Here's a look at some of our recommendations for routine wellness testing and answers to some of your top questions:

Why does my pet need heartworm testing? I give the recommended heartworm preventives every month.

The American Heartworm Society (AHS) recommends at least once yearly testing for dogs. Why? One reason: Heartworm prevention works by retroactive protection. For example, if you dose your pet on the first of this month, the dose covers any infection your pet was exposed to in the previous month, instead of the current month. So if you miss a dose and don't notice right away, enough time can lapse for the tiny susceptible baby heartworms to mature past the level where the heartworm preventive medication can work.

No commercially available test will detect the babies until they become adults, so

there is a limbo period where the heartworms are neither susceptible nor detectable. If we are giving the pills and running the tests on our dogs every year, we can catch them before they cause extensive damage to the vessels of the heart and lungs and is most likely still treatable.

This yearly testing is important and should be included in your prevention plan. Remember, if there are undetected heartworms in your dog's heart and lungs, they will cause irreparable damage that can lead to heart failure and other dangerous consequences.

The AHS recommendation for testing cats is more complicated. We will help you decide what heartworm testing is appropriate for your cat.



Why does my pet need a fecal check?

Many of our parasite control products cover intestinal parasites, but not *every* intestinal parasite. Our veterinary team will review the label of your product with you and discuss what the product covers. Even the most comprehensive coverage often doesn't include protozoal parasites or tapeworms.

Our veterinary team will start by visually examining the stool sample. Then we will take steps to concentrate the parasite eggs so we can examine them under the microscope. The fecal flotation procedure allows us to identify which types of parasites your pet carries and tailor the deworming protocol to your specific pet. We recommend fecal testing every six months for normal pets and more often if your pet is experiencing gastrointestinal upset, like vomiting or diarrhea.

What are wellness blood tests, and what do they test for?

Wellness screens include complete blood counts (CBC), serum chemistry profiles and other tests more specific to individual patients. For example, a CBC lets us check the number of red and white blood cells, showing us anemia and flagging certain things to watch for, like increases in white blood cells, which can indicate infection. We also measure clotting cells called platelets. Measuring platelets is especially helpful if your pet needs any type of dental procedure or surgery. Serum chemistry panels open a window on several organ systems and help detect diseases such as diabetes and kidney disease. Abnormalities can trigger additional testing, allowing us to identify disease processes early, when many diseases are more treatable. Even if your pet seems normal, this type of testing is critical for continuing good health.

Our veterinary team will explain the appropriate tests for your pet based on species, age, gender, and lifestyle. Baseline testing is important for your pet's overall wellness. Find a way to save and budget for this testing yearly. When you plan ahead for your pet's routine testing, you're making an investment in your pet's longevity and happiness.

Talked with your veterinarian about testing?

Move forward 3 spaces on the "Happy Pet Path."



The uncomfortable truth about parasites

Consider these disturbing facts about bugs and worms that live on—and in—your pet. Then ask us the best moves to keep your pet parasite-free

Why should I care about fleas?

The biting, the itching, the scratching—fleas can make pets miserable. And flea allergies are a common problem for our pets. Flea saliva is an extremely irritating substance and flea bites cause profound itching for pets—and people too. Fleas love to get indoors, where they can live year-round. Their goal is to have a blood meal so that they can lay eggs and make baby fleas. We can recommend the safest and most effective prescription flea products to protect your pet.

What about ticks?

Like fleas, ticks are a discomfort, an inconvenience and can be a health risk. Ticks can carry some pretty serious diseases, and many are regional. Tick-borne diseases can make pets feel really rotten—and some are even life-

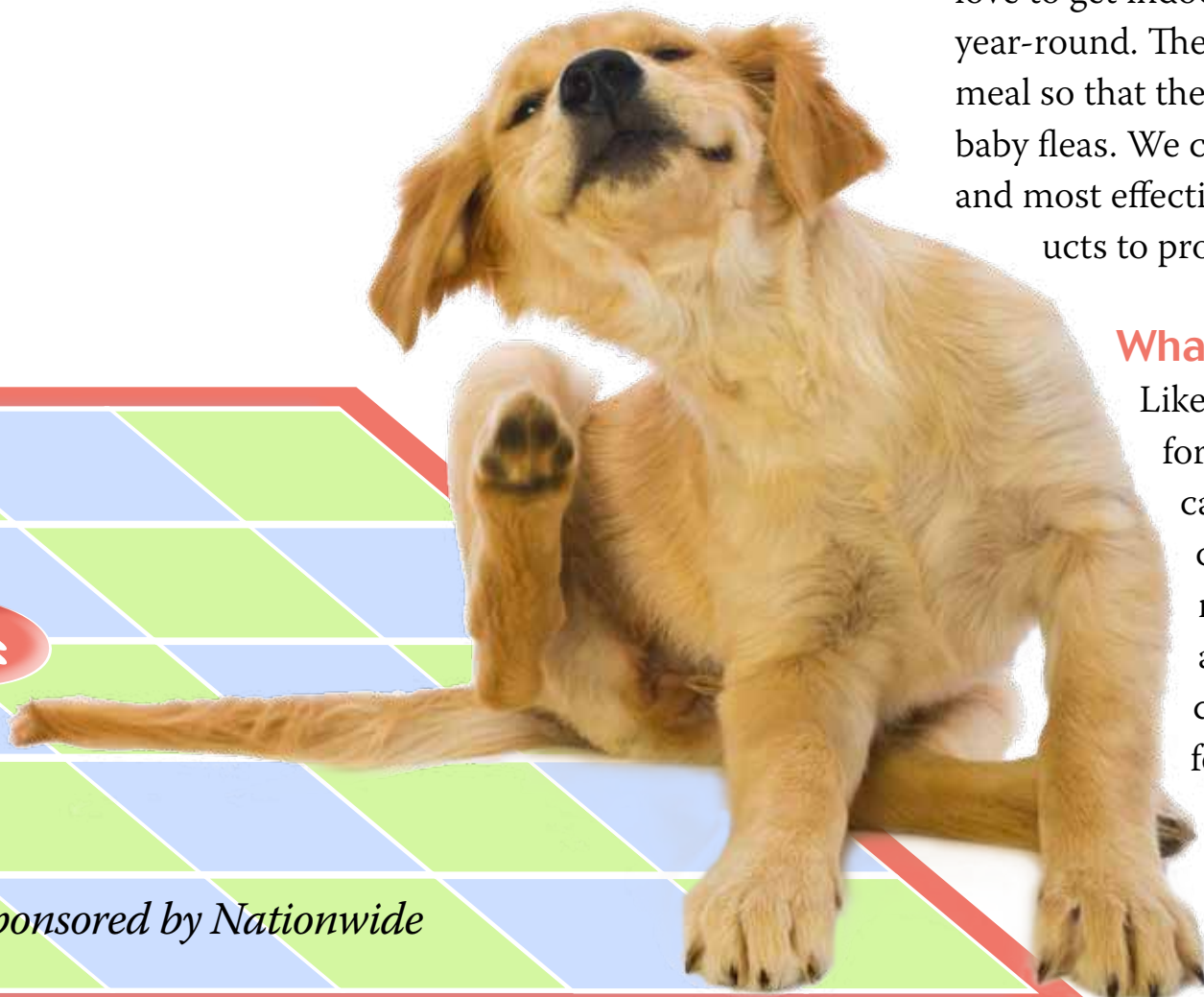
threatening. We can tell you which diseases are prevalent in our area and recommend products to protect your pet.

Are intestinal worms a real threat?

These little internal parasites can be a big issue. Because they reside inside of pets, they can cause unapparent and insidious damage that can risk the lives of affected animals.

Intestinal worms, including hookworms and roundworms, can cause signs like vomiting and diarrhea. And sometimes your pet will show no signs at all. Intestinal parasites tend to damage the intestinal walls, where they attach, and their mere presence can cause inflammation. Juvenile animals seem to be the most severely affected, and sometimes puppies and kittens die from an overload of intestinal worms.

Worms will seed the soil where your pet hangs out and serve as a source of reinfection for your pets and other animals. We



can recommend dewormers for your pets.

Tapeworms are another intestinal parasite to watch out for. They come from fleas, not soil, and only veterinary dewormers labeled to remove tapeworms are effective. The good news: Prescription flea preventives may also protect your pet from tapeworms.

Do I need to worry about heartworms?

One of the most important internal parasites of dogs (and less publicized for cats) is the heartworm. Heartworm larvae ride along inside a mosquito. When a mosquito carrying larvae bites your pet, your pet may be infected. These baby heartworms travel around in your pet's blood and mature, along the way finding a cozy spot to reside in the heart or vessels of the lung. Untreated dogs will progress to congestive heart failure. In cats, many common feline respiratory issues have been linked to heartworms—and the first sign of heartworm in cats is often death.

Protect your pets and your family with our advice for parasite control. We can help you keep your pets parasite-free!

Talked with your veterinarian about parasite prevention?

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What should I feed my pet?

A game of *20 Questions* will help you and our veterinary team decide the right diet for your best friend

You want to feed your pet a diet that keeps her healthy and happy and helps her live longer. We're here to help guide your food choices for your pet. Studies show the positive effects of proper nutrition at all stages of life for healthy or sick pets.

Your pet's nutritional requirements depend on specific factors, like age, overall health, gender and activity level. We also consider any medications your pet takes to manage

long-term disease processes.

A good place to start: read the food label. Look for products that are labeled "complete and balanced" for your pet's life stage by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) or the National Research Council. Next, bring your chosen diet to our office to let us help you evaluate your selection.

Remember, labels can be misleading. Buzzwords like "holistic" or "natural" actually mean very little and are designed to sell pet food.

The best pet food companies spend their money on scientific development, not advertising.

Choose a brand that lists the manufacturer's phone number on the packaging. You can contact the company or we can call a representative for you. Here's an example of questions we want to ask:

❖ Who formulates your diet?

A veterinary nutritionist should formulate pet foods. Remember, big-name celebrities are not pet food experts.

❖ Do you have a veterinary nutritionist on staff who can answer questions?

❖ Where is your diet manufactured?

❖ How do you ensure quality, purity and compliance with AAFCO requirements?

❖ Is the quality of your product proven through feeding trials?



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Commercial pet foods are held to basic standards, but you want more for your pet. AAFCO requires nutritional analysis, but these studies can be performed on ingredients and not necessarily live animal feeding trials. Feeding trials are better proof of performance than chemical analysis of nutrients.

- ❖ **What is the calorie content of a cup of your diet?**
- ❖ **Has your product been researched? Are the findings published?**

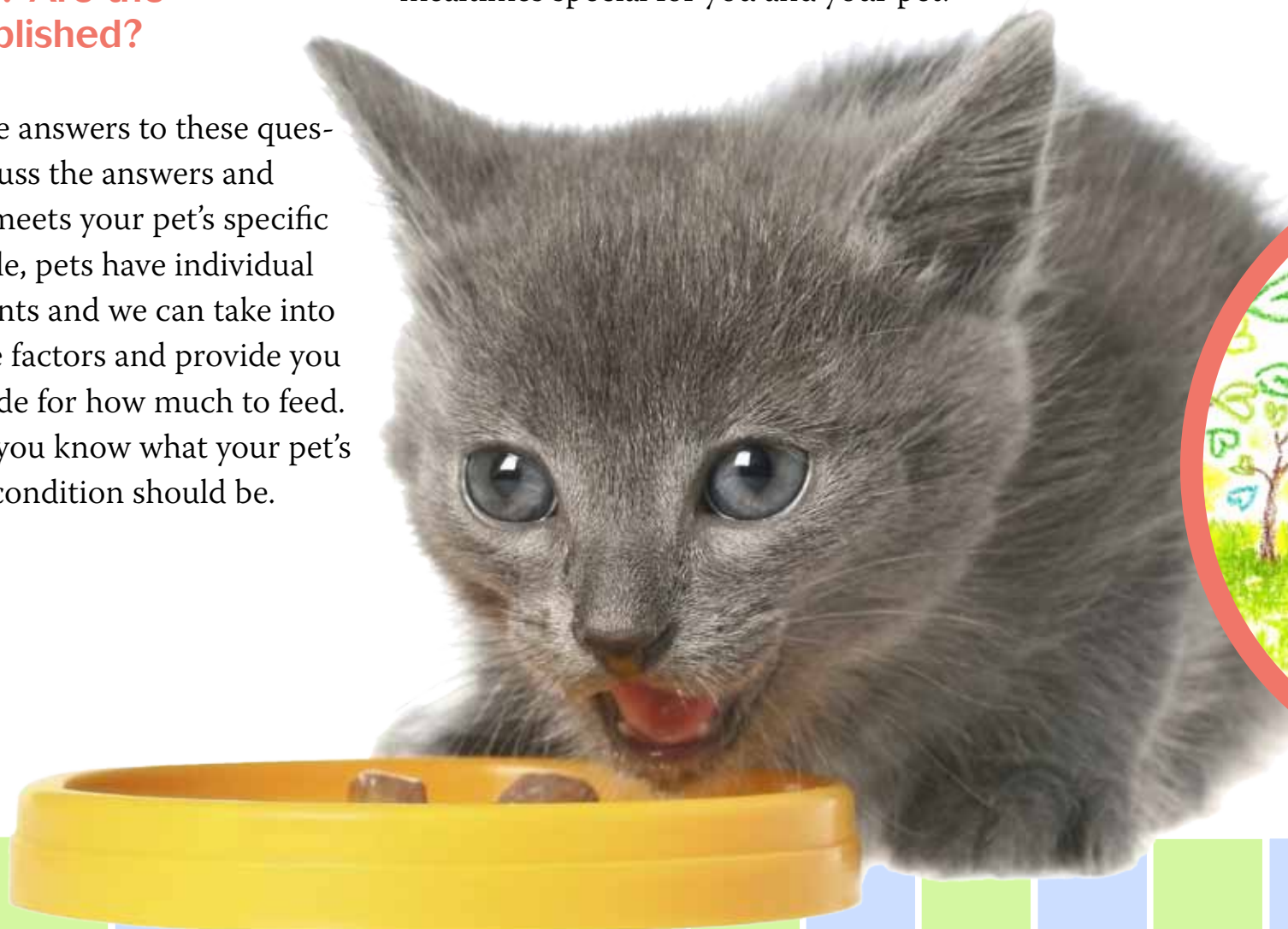
Once you have the answers to these questions, we can discuss the answers and whether the diet meets your pet's specific needs. For example, pets have individual calorie requirements and we can take into account the above factors and provide you with the basic guide for how much to feed. We can also help you know what your pet's weight and body condition should be.

Once you have chosen a diet and we have shown you what amount is appropriate for your pet, be sure that you always maintain mealtimes where your pet has a limited time to ingest his food. This avoids boredom eating and helps reinforce to your pet that you are a source of food. If he's hungry, he will be more driven to be obedient to commands and learn the behaviors you want to encourage.

We are a nutrition resource here for you and your pet, and we are happy to help you choose a diet and discuss how to make mealtimes special for you and your pet.

Talked with your veterinarian about the best food for your cat or dog?

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4 tips for tiptop teeth

Working toward a healthy mouth is always the right move for a happy, comfortable pet.

Chew on this: Dental health has been irrefutably linked to our pets' overall wellbeing. Even a small amount of tartar contains trillions of bacteria. Yuck! We're not trying to gross you out here, but it's important to know that these bacteria cause dental pain, and infections sometimes spread to other organs, potentially creating abscesses and heart disease.

Has your pet's less-than-fresh breath ever made you recoil? Even something as simple as bad breath can damage your bond with your pet.

Here's what you can do to maintain your pet's dental health:

1 Schedule an oral exam by your veterinarian.

First we can examine your pet's mouth visually. We can look for visible signs of dental pain, infection and odor. Sometimes this initial examination shows broken or

damaged teeth that will require care. Then we can tell you if your pet needs an anesthetized dental assessment and cleaning.

2 Plan a thorough oral exam and cleaning under anesthesia.

It's critical that your pet be under anesthesia for a dental cleaning because we must address tartar both above and below the gum line. Before we anesthetize your pet, we use pre-anesthetic testing to make sure it's safe to use anesthesia on your pet and uncover any hidden signs of trouble. If we find something, we can tailor the anesthetic protocol to bypass potential pitfalls and give your pet the best chance for an uneventful recovery.

While your pet is happily sleeping, we can truly examine each tooth, checking for pockets of disease and loose and damaged teeth. Your pet can't tell us when painful trouble is lurking where we can't see it. So



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we will take radiographs of your anesthetized pet's teeth and jaws to uncover disease around the roots of the teeth.



3 Opt for advanced dental care as needed.

We can address some disease when we clean your pet's teeth. But if there are extensive issues that are painful or dangerous for your dog or cat, we may make a treatment plan for another time or even schedule a visit with a veterinary dentist (a veterinarian with extra training in animal dentistry).

4 Implement home care for a happy mouth.

Once your pet's mouth is a clean slate, it's time to implement at-home care. Your options include daily tooth brushing, rinses or water additives, and dental chews. After we perform the assessment and clean your pet's teeth, we can discuss the best options for you and your pet.

When you make your pet's dental health a priority for you and your family, you help improve your pet's health for a potentially longer and more comfortable life.

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Scheduled a dental exam for your cat or dog?

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How should I train my puppy or dog?

Training is always a winning strategy — you gain a well-mannered companion and your pet feels secure knowing what you expect of him.

Not everyone can train their dog to do amazing tricks (and not everyone wants to), but a well-mannered, socialized dog is a pleasure to be around. A dog that knows what you expect will be happy. Knowing what you want and the correct response gives your dog confidence and trust in you. Life is less scary if he knows that you're pleased.

Positive reinforcement—working for a pay-off—is the preferred method of learning because it creates a brain pathway linking an action directly to a desired response. Use these tips to help you make the most out of training your dog:

1 Find a high-value food reward for your dog.

Each dog has specific tastes, but most dogs like certain items, such as freeze-dried chicken. Make sure that you read the label on everything you feed to your dog. And if you aren't sure, ask our veterinary team and we will be happy to guide you.

2 Make sure your dog depends strictly on you for meeting his needs.

Don't leave food available all the time for him to eat anytime. Offer food at specific meal times and take it away after 10 to 15 minutes if he doesn't finish it all. You want him to be tuned in and have a hunger drive to help focus on what you want him to learn. Rewards reinforce that you are the provider and your wishes are paramount.

3 Handling a puppy and making sure he's accustomed to the things that will be a part of his life is an investment in your happy future.

He needs to know about his leash and what it means. He should be used to having his body handled—especially his ears and feet and toes to prepare for future cleaning and nail trimming—and be unafraid of car travel and other people and animals. Take him everywhere you can and let him see activity and animals. If he sees that you're calm about the new people and experiences, he will feel safe. Incorporate food rewards into all of these lessons.

4 Don't push your goal past the point where he resists. Break your goal into tiny steps. For example, if you want to trim his nails, start by lifting the first foot and then reward him before he pulls it away. Always let go before he resists so he doesn't think it was his idea to fight you and he won. Never move on and force compliance, because battles damage trust. It might take weeks to train a simple task, but patience is critical.

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Have fun! Training time is a priceless bonding time for you and your dog. It increases your dog's dependence on you and his attention to you. A bonus: It's fun to reward your dog, and the time you spend training is an investment in your bond.

Trained your dog or puppy?

Move forward 3 spaces on the "Happy Pet Path."



Should I train my cat or kitten?

Just like teaching a child to play a board game, training your cat takes time and positive reinforcement. But the result is fun for you both.

Some people think that it's impossible to train cats and kittens. But actually, it's not impossible—and it is critical. The magic acts in Vegas featuring big cats prove that cats can learn to respond for the right motivator, as long as you take the time to teach them what actions precipitate rewards. Positive reinforcement, or working for a payoff, is the preferred method of learning because it creates a brain pathway linking an action directly to a desired response.

Use these tips to help you make the most out of training your cat or kitten:



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1 Find a food reward that's high value to your cat. Different cats like different things, and many cats like canned cat food and meats. The smell and texture can motivate her compliance.

2 Make sure your cat depends strictly on you for meeting her needs. Don't leave food available all the time for her to eat at her leisure. Offer your cat's food at specific times, and take it away after 10 to 15 minutes if she doesn't finish it all. You want her to tune in and have a hunger drive to help focus on what you want her to learn.

3 Handle your kitten and make sure she's used to the things that will be a part of her life. This is a great investment in your happy future together. She needs to know about—and not fear—her carrier, having her body handled and being picked up and carried. Incorporate food rewards into all of these necessary lessons. Consider these fun activities:

- > **Hide kibbles inside the carrier, and keep the carrier in plain sight.**
- > **Place canned food on your fingers for a quick snack while you're holding your cat.**
- > **Go for short drives with your cat inside the carrier, with a passenger passing your kitty rewards.**

4 Don't push your goal past the point where your cat resists. If she doesn't like the carrier, don't jam her in, slam the door and start throwing treats inside. This will trigger her panic response and make her unable to learn. Break

your goal into tiny steps. For example, you could feed her near the carrier and gradually move the bowl closer each day.

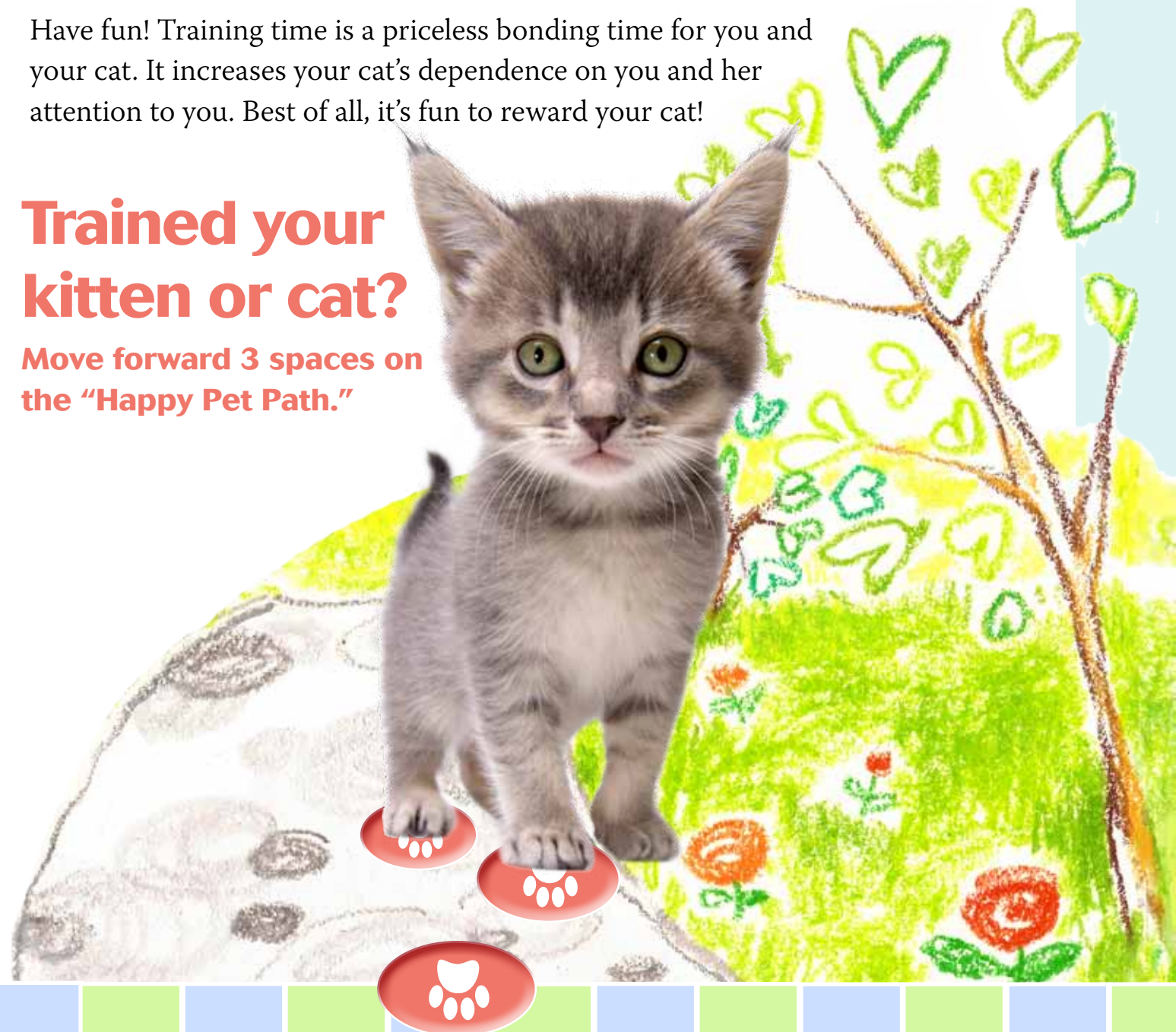
5 Never reward behaviors that you didn't ask for, like meowing loudly and demanding attention.

If she's screaming for her treat, you must ignore it or redirect her to perform her task instead and then get the reward.

Have fun! Training time is a priceless bonding time for you and your cat. It increases your cat's dependence on you and her attention to you. Best of all, it's fun to reward your cat!

Trained your kitten or cat?

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What's the deal with pet insurance and wellness plans?

Are you willing to roll the dice when it comes to your pet's wellbeing?



Here's a quick summary of pet insurance and wellness plans, including advice on how to pick a plan that is right for you.

Pet insurance removes financial hurdles from the decision-making when your pet is faced with a health crisis.

When your pet is critically ill or injured, the last thing you want to think about is money. Your pet's life and wellbeing certainly are priceless, but unfortunately we all have a budget.

This is where pet insurance comes in. When your pet is covered, you can focus on the important things and know that the price tag is taken care of. It's one less thing to worry about when worry is all you can do.

What is pet insurance?

It's important for pet owners to understand that pet insurance isn't like human health insurance. It's more like auto insurance, designed to help plan for the costs of large (and unexpected) medical issues. Clients pay a monthly premium (and prices vary depend-

ing on plan and company) instead of being swamped by a surprise illness or injury. It's like, well ... insurance.

Choose your plan.

You have so many options for pet insurance, and it can feel overwhelming. Do your homework. You can choose your carrier, your plan and your deductible. Ask us about our experiences, and be sure to talk to people you know who have pet insurance to hear about their experiences. Next, talk with representatives at pet insurance companies. The plan—and the company—needs to be right for your pet's needs and yours. Research the best fit for your pet, taking into account his age, breed, lifestyle and health so far.

Make sure you know what's covered—and what's not.

Review the companies on your list and compare plans. There will be differences in coverage and deductibles, depending on the policy and the options you select. So it's important to know what

you're buying so you're prepared when you need to use your policy.

You may hesitate to explore pet insurance because you hope you'll never need it. If you don't ever need the protection of your policy, you can consider yourself lucky. And when you do need it, you'll likely be grateful for the coverage in your pet's time of need.

What about the regular everyday expenses of pet ownership?

Some pet insurance companies offer riders to cover preventive care. Make wellness coverage a part of your research, so that you know the variables of the plan, like deductible and premium. Preventive care is an issue that touches every pet, because all pets need it to stay healthy and happy.

Another great way to help plan for wellness care is through a wellness plan. We're happy to guide you with information about the wellness plans we recommend. Most plans provide all the suggested care at a single price—often discounted as a part of the plan—and many offer monthly payment options. These plans are the most helpful if you're interested in providing your pets the

best care and need some help planning for and spacing out the expense.

The best part about wellness plans is that they are designed to prevent disease and detect problems early—when they're most treatable—so they're an investment in the life and health of your pet. The best part: comprehensive wellness plans may help keep your pet healthier—and avoid big-ticket surprises in the future.

Wellness plans and pet insurance can work together to keep your pet and your budget happy and healthy!

Have insurance or a wellness plan for your cat or dog?

Move forward 3 spaces on the "Happy Pet Path."



Congratulations ... on moving forward down the “Happy Pet Path!”

We know you don't play games with your pet's health. And neither do we! Remember that the team at your veterinary practice is always ready to help you manage all aspects of your pet's care. Together we can take steps to keep your pet happy and healthy throughout his or her life.

