

Appendix 14

Teaching your Cat or Kitten to Accept Veterinary Examination

Going to the vets and being physically examined can be an intrusive and unpleasant experience for many cats and kittens, unless it is something that the cat has become fully accustomed to and especially if it is an experience that has become associated with something enjoyable, such as being given tasty food treats.

- Start by preparing the food treats for your cat. These can be dry treats broken up into very small pieces or some form of soft food such as mashed up tuna, meat paste or yoghurt that can be given on a spoon. The food should be placed in a pot, preferably one with a lid, especially if your cat may attempt to steal the treats.
- Begin the training at a time when your cat is relaxed but not actually asleep.
- Concentrate on one area at a time at each training session.
- Keep your pot of treats (or soft food) nearby and reward with a treat immediately after each pretend examination.
- Start at a low level of handling and gradually increase so that your cat remains comfortable with your actions. Always ensure that your cat is fully comfortable with one stage of the training before progressing to the next.
- Never physically force your cat to comply, nor become angry or impatient with him. Stop immediately if your cat or kitten shows signs of distress or discomfort.
- Keep training sessions short – no more than a few seconds at a time – but try to repeat training sessions at least once a day.

Examining the Mouth

1. Start by gently stroking the cat's upper and lower lips a few times on one side, reward, then repeat on the other side. After doing this a few times, stroke both sides before rewarding.
2. Gently open the cat's lips very slightly, one side and then the other, then reward.
3. Do this daily – each time gradually lifting the lips and exposing the teeth a little bit more.
4. Also open the mouth – hold around the top of the cat's head gently, lift the upper lips slightly with your index finger and thumb, then place a finger or thumb from the other hand on the front of the lower jaw and pull this down to open the mouth. As before, start by opening the cat's mouth a very tiny amount and gradually increase at each training session.
5. To see how to do this watch the following video: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=rHmnrULI4gU&feature=youtu.be>.

Examining the Ears

1. Start by just stroking and gently rubbing the ears, then reward.
2. Progress to gently holding the tip of the cat's ear and lifting it slightly up and back to expose the ear canal, then reward.
3. Gradually increase this movement to where you can fold the ear flap back fully to expose and examine the ear canal. **Never put anything in your cat's ears unless advised to do so by your vet or vet nurse/technician.**
4. To see how to do this watch the following video: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=4lGPATjs3no&feature=youtu.be>.

Examining the Feet and Clipping the Nails

1. Start by just touching the foot, then reward.
2. Progress to gently holding the foot, then reward.
3. The next stage is to hold and gently rub the foot, gradually applying slightly more pressure so that you are eventually able to extend the claws. Be careful to take things slowly. It can help to give a food treat at the same time as doing this. Offering paste on the end of a spoon can often be a good idea as the cat will take time licking the paste.
4. Only when your cat is happy to have his foot held and claws extended should you progress to clipping his nails.
5. First allow your cat to become accustomed to the sight and feel of the clippers, by letting him investigate them and giving him a reward. Then just touch his feet with the clippers, followed by a reward.
6. When you clip his nails be careful to only clip the very ends of the claws to avoid hitting the blood vessel and nerve ending inside the nail. To begin with clip only a couple of claws or at most just the claws on one foot before giving a reward.
7. Gradually increase the number of nails you clip in between giving rewards. But always stop if your cat becomes restless or distressed.

To see how to accustom your cat to having his feet examined and his claws trimmed see: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=V8SMinphtB4&feature=youtu.be>, and: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U36rsW_WhUA.

The video links in this appendix are from International Cat Care – <https://www.icatcare.org>. Other helpful cat handling videos can be accessed via: <https://icatcare.org/advice/cat-handling-videos> or via the iCatCare YouTube page: <https://m.youtube.com/user/iCatCare>.

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