



Cat Health

In this document we will cover:

- Vaccinations
- Parasite prevention
- Your cat's hygiene
- The importance of neutering your cat
- Health conditions
- Effects of neutering
- How neutering effects behaviour

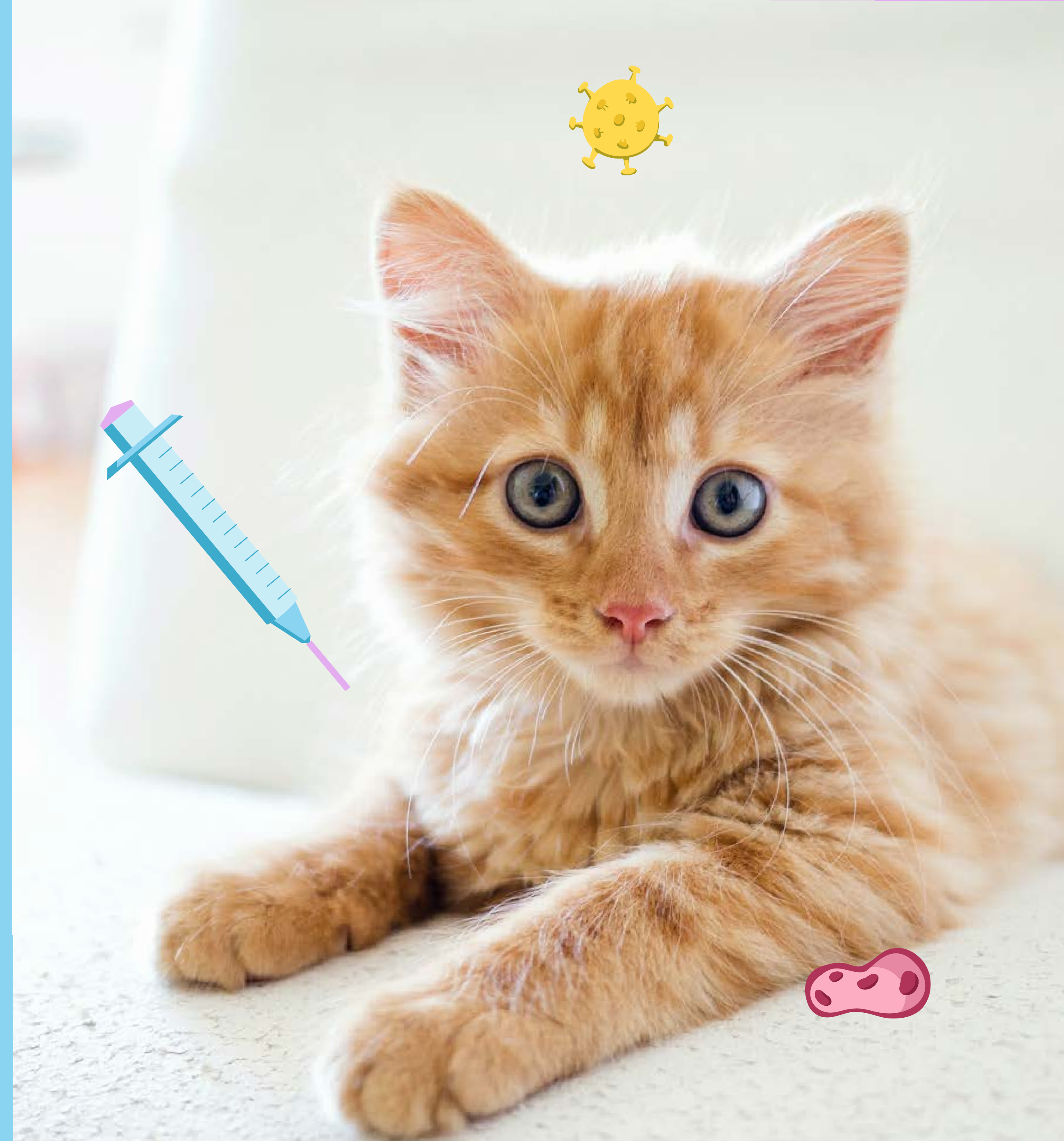
Vaccinations

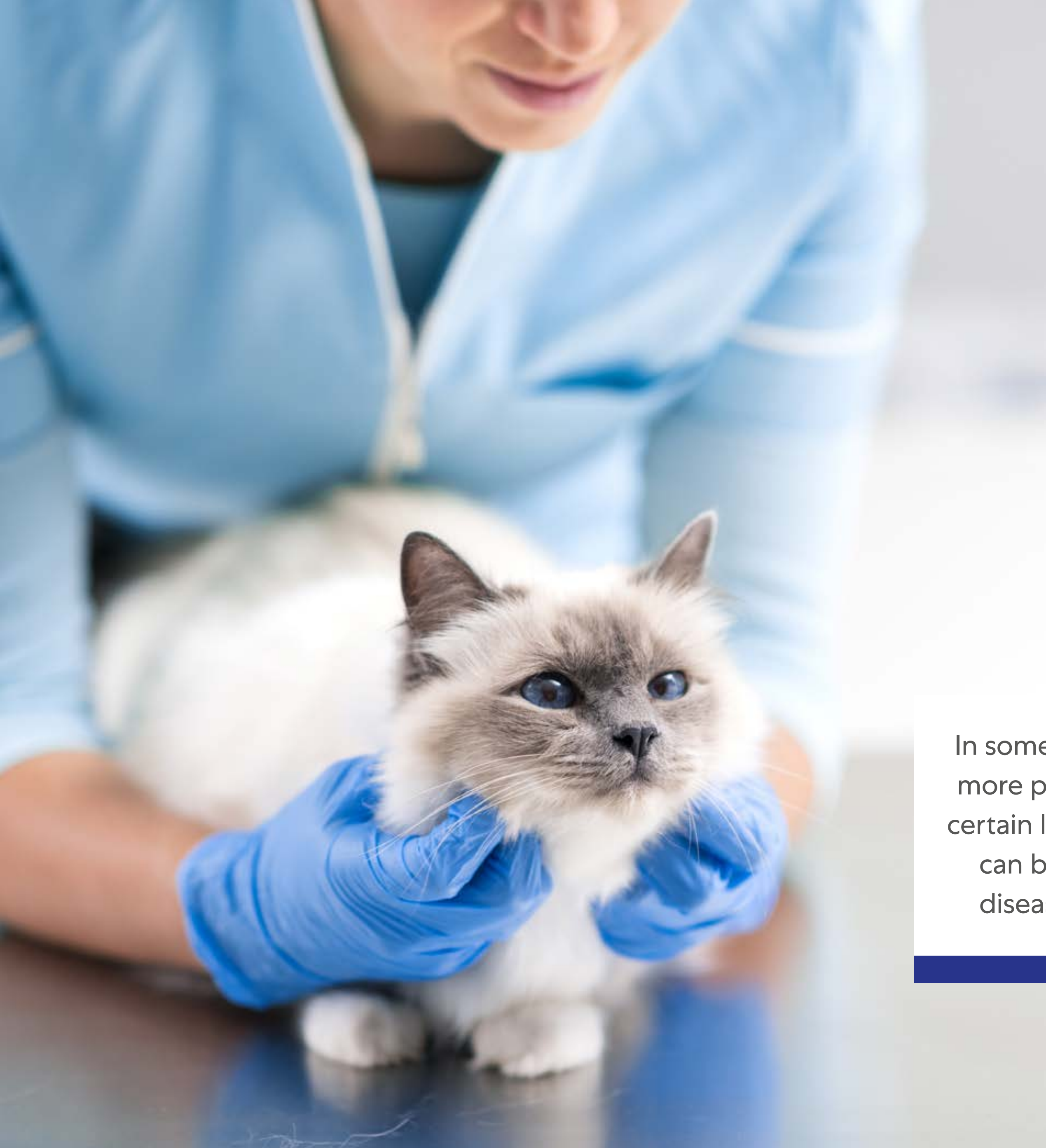
Vaccinations are one of the most powerful preventative veterinary healthcare tools for your cat's physical health. They also help protect human health too. Cats can be protected from many serious and potentially deadly diseases such as feline rhinotracheitis, panleukopaenia, feline leukaemia virus, and rabies through vaccination. Vaccination recommendations and legal requirements should be discussed with your vet and adjusted to reflect lifestyle changes, age and general health. This can be done as part of regular health check-ups.¹

Parasite prevention

Cats are also commonly affected by endo (internal) parasites such as gastrointestinal worms, and ecto (external) parasites, such as fleas and ticks. The consequences of these can range from mild irritation to being life-threatening for your pet. However, even a 'mild' infection or infestation can have a serious impact on your cat's emotional wellbeing. This could be directly either through the discomfort of constant itching, or indirectly; through the results of overgrooming or reduced enjoyment from food due to gastrointestinal issues. Cats affected by parasites often display decreased activity or a depressed mood.

¹Day, MJ, Horzinek, MC, Schultz, RD, & Squires, RA, 2016, Guidelines For The Vaccination Of Dogs And Cats, Available at: <https://wsava.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/WSAVA-Vaccination-Guidelines-2015.pdf>, Accessed 04 January 2022





Your cat's hygiene

It is easy for a cat with a parasitic infection or infestation to go unnoticed as cats often do not show any obvious outward signs. A regular veterinary health check-up, routine parasite prevention treatment and good hygiene will help to minimise the risk of infection. This is to protect your family too, as many parasite-transmitted diseases are also transmissible to humans, with children or immunocompromised adults at highest risk. If you adopt a cat who has overt signs of severe parasitism, this may also be an indicator that their physical, mental and emotional needs and preferences haven't been cared for in other areas too.

In some geographic areas certain parasites, such as disease-carrying ticks, are more problematic than others. Though it is less common than in dogs, cats in certain locations may also become infected with heartworm (more information can be found [here](#).) You should ask your veterinarian to advise you on the disease risks in your area and the best preventive course of action to take.

The importance of neutering your cat

It's not surprising that neutering plays a critical role in supporting animal welfare on a global scale. Neutering reduces the number of cats that are without a home and lack access to the basic resources that allow them to live happy and healthy lives. Neutering is especially important if you have an outdoor cat. Neutering may also benefit individual cats, by increasing longevity and reducing the incidence of certain cancers.²

In some situations, however, neutering may not be a consideration at all if the cat is to be used for breeding, for example. This is where responsible pet ownership is paramount. Traditionally, it has been recommended that cats are neutered between five and eight months of age, but there is increasing evidence to suggest that early neutering from four months is not only safe³ but may also be beneficial.

Your veterinarian will be the best person to advise you on the optimal time to neuter your cat and answer any questions you may have about the procedure



²Serpell, J., & McCune, S., 2018, WALTHAM™ pocket book of responsible pet ownership, 1st Edition, Sleaf Creative Ltd: Leicestershire, Available at: https://www.waltham.com/sites/g/files/jydp1046/files/2020-05/responsible_pet_ownership_book_waltham.pdf, Accessed 11 January 2022

³Howe, LM, 2015, Current Perspectives on the optimal age to spay/castrate dogs and cats, Vet Med (Auckl), Vol. 6, 171-180



Health Conditions

So how does neutering affect emotional wellbeing? Many health conditions which can be potentially related to neuter status are painful and reduce a cat's enjoyment of life. For instance, female cats spayed before six months of age have a 91% reduction in the risk of developing mammary cancer. Early neutering of both sexes has also been associated with reduced incidence of diseases like asthma and gingivitis.⁴

Effects of neutering

The act of neutering itself, however, may also cause mild stress and discomfort in some cats but veterinary professionals will act to minimise any pain or stress they may be feeling during the procedure and recovery period. Neutered cats may also be predisposed to becoming [overweight](#), and so require careful portion control, as well as regular monitoring of their weight and body condition score (see [Nutrition](#)).⁵

⁴Serpell, J, & McCune, S, 2018, WALTHAM™ pocket book of responsible pet ownership, 1st Edition, Sleaf Creative Ltd: Leicestershire, Available at: https://www.waltham.com/sites/g/files/jydpvr1046/files/2020-05/responsible_pet_ownership_book_waltham.pdf, Accessed 11 January 2022

⁵Vendramini, THA, Amaral, AR, Pedrini, V, et al., 2020, Neutering in dogs and cats: current scientific evidence and importance of adequate nutritional management, Nutrition Research Reviews, DOI: 10.1017/S0954422419000271, Accessed 07 February 2022

How neutering impacts behaviour

Neutering can also have a significant impact on a cat's behaviour, reducing undesirable behaviours such as hyperactivity, urine spraying and even aggression.⁶

These types of behaviours can impact the bond you have with your cat as well as reduce the activities and interactions you feel comfortable doing with them. Cats that fight regularly are also at risk of developing painful cat-bite abscesses and contracting infectious diseases such as Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) and Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV) that can impact their physical and emotional health and suppress their immune system long term.

Learn more about health and emotional wellbeing for your pets at [shine.waltham.com](https://www.shine.waltham.com)

