



Animal Clinic Of Billings, P.C.

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For Immediate Release

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Baby's First Visit to the Vet

Long term good health for your puppy or kitten starts with regular veterinary care

The only thing better than spring...is welcoming a new puppy or kitten in the spring. Raising a little furry bundle of mischief can be both challenging and rewarding. People who develop a relationship with a veterinarian soon after they obtain their little one take an important step towards a lifetime of health and wellness for their new family member.

There are several important reasons to schedule a pediatric visit as soon as you acquire your new puppy or kitten. First, a thorough physical exam will reveal if any health issues are present. If any birth defects (such as hernias, cleft palate, and heart defects) or infectious diseases (such as upper respiratory infections) are present, your vet will make a plan to address them. In addition, an oral de-worming medication will be administered. "Because essentially all puppies and kittens get intestinal parasites from their mothers, we always give multiple doses of de-worming medication over the first few visits, then check a fecal sample to confirm that no parasites remain," explains Dr. Youngstrom, associate veterinarian at the Animal Clinic of Billings.

Dr. Youngstrom explains that another important reason to get your new family member in for a pediatric appointment is to start their vaccine series.

"Vaccination is very important for puppies and kittens because their immune systems are not yet fully formed, which makes them more vulnerable to infectious diseases than adult animals. Antibodies from their mothers' milk help to protect them up until they are about six weeks old, but after that they need vaccines to reduce their risk of catching serious diseases."

All puppies need the DHLPP (Distemper/CAV-2/Leptospirosis/Parainfluenza/Parvovirus) combo vaccine at 8, 12, and 16 weeks of age, as well as the rabies vaccine at 12 weeks old. The bordatella vaccine, which protects against one of the causes of kennel cough, can also be given. All kittens need the FVRCP (viral rhinotracheitis/calicivirus/panleukopenia virus) combo vaccine at 8, 12, and 16 weeks of age and the rabies vaccine at 12 weeks old. Kittens that will not be kept exclusively indoors also need the FeLV (feline leukemia virus) vaccine at 12 and 16 weeks old.

Last but not least, pediatric visits offer an opportunity to discuss proper nutrition, socialization, training, and spaying/neutering.

By bringing your new puppy or kitten in for appointments at 8, 12, and 16 weeks old, you will be "getting them off on the right paw" for healthy growth and development, and establishing a relationship that will promote a lifetime of health and wellness.