Our family has just adopted our first cat. What veterinary care does it need to start off on the right path to a healthy life?

All cats should have an annual veterinary examination. More frequent visits may be needed based on the individual needs of the cat.

A complete physical exam by your veterinarian should include a dental assessment and body condition scoring. This will provide a baseline of your cat's health for future comparisons as your cat ages.

Cats need year-round protection from parasites such as heartworms, intestinal parasites and fleas. Ticks are also abundant in Oklahoma and should be included in your cat's parasite protection plan.

Your veterinarian can provide preventive product information and recommendations.

Your cat also needs the following standard vaccinations to protect them from:

- Rabies virus
- Feline panleukopenia virus
- Feline rhinotracheitis virus
- Calicivirus

There are additional vaccines which your veterinarian may recommend depending on your cat's indoor/outdoor lifestyle.

To help control the pet population, spay or neuter your cat.

It is always wise to be sure your cat is wearing appropriate identification in case it ever becomes separated from the family.

An easy method is to have your veterinarian inject a microchip subcutaneously (under the skin) in your pet. This procedure can be done in the veterinarian's office in a matter of seconds and does not require that your cat be anesthetized.

Cats can be wonderful companions and remember that bad things can happen if your cat is allowed to roam outside on its own. So if you want to keep your cat safe from the outside elements, make them a house cat. Most cats kept inside will live a very long and happy life when provided with the proper veterinary care.

This column is provided by the faculty of the OSU Veterinary Medical Hospital. The large volume of questions does not allow us to directly respond to specific email questions so please watch for your answer in the column. Email your questions for the column to dvmoncall@postoffice.cvhs.okstate.edu
and watch for your answer.

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