

## **Cat Focus Month Four – Outdoor Felines**

Previously, we outlined the importance of once-per-year cat exams as well as twice-per-year exams for senior cats over 7 years old. These exams are vital to maintaining cat health year round. In our first cat-focused article in this series, we discussed the importance of yearly bloodwork for all cats. Last month, we talked about obesity in cats. This month we will identify how to keep your outdoor feline safe.

### **Identification is Key**

Cats that go outdoors travel farther than most people think. An average cat has a range of about 5 acres that it covers as part of its territory. A cat could easily be mistaken as a stray by well-meaning people, or end up in the impound after it is picked up by animal control. The majority of cats found in humane societies, or impounds, are not reunited with their owner without clear identification.

1. Cats should have a collar with an identification tag. Release collars are best that will open if a cat gets the collar stuck on something.
2. All cats should be microchipped. This is a small chip the size of a rice grain that is implanted under the skin between the shoulder blades. Your veterinarian can apply a microchip easily. When found, your pet will be scanned by a handheld device that most veterinary clinics and shelters/impounds use. A number comes up, and this can be traced to the owner's information.

### **Parasite Control**

Cats are natural hunters, and the prey they eat carry many different types of internal parasites. Common parasites include roundworms, hookworms and tapeworms. A cat that is outside in Minnesota will also pick up ticks. Cats are good groomers and often will remove the ticks. However, ticks can be found around the ears, face and neck areas where cats cannot easily reach with their tongue. Fleas are a constant risk to cats. Once a cat becomes infested, it can take over three months to rid your house and the environment of the fleas. Talk to your veterinarian about what products are best for your cat to control parasites, ticks and fleas. Use caution with any treatments purchased from pet stores. These products often do not work as well as prescription products, and some topical products can be harsh and have side effects. At The Zimmerman Veterinary Clinic, we prescribe Advantage Multi, which is a topical liquid applied once per month and covers roundworms, hookworms, fleas, ear mites and heartworm disease. Frontline is often used along with Advantage Multi to kill Ticks.

### **Outdoor Safety**

Only cats that have all of their claws intact should be allowed to go outside unsupervised. Cats need their claws for defense, and to climb away from danger. Cats often get into trouble with other animals during the night time when they are most active. If possible, keeping your cat inside at night may prevent injuries. Always check your cat over daily for any signs of wounds. Bites and punctures can quickly turn into an abscess and cause pain and tissue damage, if not treated by a veterinarian quickly.

### **Rabies is Deadly**

Cats that go outdoors are at a higher risk of contracting Rabies, therefore they should always be current on their Rabies Vaccination. This is a fatal disease for humans. In 2012, four cats in Minnesota tested positive for Rabies. Often by the time a cat is diagnosed multiple people were exposed to the cat. When a person is exposed to a rabid animal, a series of post-exposure vaccinations is necessary to help protect from developing rabies.