

WELLNESS EXAMS

What are wellness exams?

Wellness exams are a vital component of what is known as “preventive medicine”. The goal of preventive medicine is to find and treat diseases **BEFORE** they become serious. This is typically much easier on the pet, the owner and the pocket book! That old adage, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” holds true for our pets as well. There have been so many advances in veterinary medicine that many diseases which may have greatly shortened your pet’s lifespan in the past can now be managed (if detected early) so that your pet can live a longer, happier life.

We will perform a thorough evaluation of all body systems during your pet’s visit to the KSU-VMTH. It is amazing how much your pet’s health can change over a short period of time. Examples of the more common findings are dental disease, weight issues, ear/skin infections, dry eye, heart murmurs, skin tumors, cataracts, painful joints, and flea/tick/tapeworm infestations. Many of these have the potential to cause severe discomfort and sometimes fatal disease in your pet. Some diseases are also potentially zoonotic (transmitted to people).

After the physical exam has been completed, your doctor will discuss any screening lab work that may be indicated for your pet. The tests that are recommended will be determined by your pet’s age, breed, lifestyle and physical exam findings. Your pet may need only a few or several of these tests. Tests that may be recommended include: complete blood count (checks for infection/anemia), chemistry panel (organ/electrolyte evaluation), urinalysis, thyroid screening, heartworm check, FELV/FIV screen (cats), blood pressure reading, fine needle aspirate (FNA) of a mass (gathers cells for cytological exam), cytology, x-rays, tear test, glaucoma check and fecal exam.

After evaluating all physical and laboratory findings, your veterinarian will discuss any changes needed in your pet’s diet, lifestyle, medications or vaccinations. Additional tests may be needed if abnormalities are found on initial tests. Your pet’s wellness exam is also a good time to discuss behavioral issues you may have noticed as many of these can be due to undetected illness. If your pet is found to be healthy, you and your veterinarian can then discuss behavioral modification and/or drug therapy for your pet’s behavioral problem.

How often should wellness exams be performed?

This can vary depending on your pet’s age, breed, lifestyle and illness history. Generally, younger animals (less than 7 years of age) need annual wellness exams. Older pets (over 7 years of age) should have a semiannual wellness exam. Pets with potentially serious diseases may need more frequent exams and laboratory testing. It is important to remember that pets age at a more rapid rate than their human caretakers. The following chart depicts a dog or cat’s lifespan relative to human years:

Human/Pet Age Analogy

Adult Size in Pounds

Feline

Canine

Pet Age		Adult Size in Pounds				Human Equivalent Age
		0-20	21-50	51-120	>120	
3 years	28	28	29	31	39	
4 years	32	33	34	38	49	
5 years	36	38	39	45	59	
6 years	40	42	44	52	69	
7 years	44	46	49	59	79	
8 years	48	50	54	66	89	
9 years	52	54	59	73	99	
10 years	56	58	64	80		
11 years	60	62	69	87		
12 years	64	66	74	94		
13 years	68	70	79			
14 years	72	74	84			
15 years	76	78	89			
16 years	80	82	94			
17 years	84	86				
18 years	88	90				
19 years	92	94				
20 years	96					

Age Analogy Chart: W. Fortney, R. Goldston



Is there anything I can do to prepare for my pet's wellness appointment?

Yes! When you call to make your pet's wellness appointment, you will be advised to withhold food for 10-12 hours. Water should be available up to the time of your pet's appointment. Please let the receptionist know if your pet has a condition that would make withholding food detrimental (i.e. diabetes mellitus, insulinoma, history of hypoglycemia, animals less than 16 weeks of age or anything else you feel is a concern). The receptionist will contact a clinician for special instructions for your pet. Fasting is important so your pet will be properly prepared in case blood work, abdominal x-rays or sedation are necessary. We never know what we might find when we do our exam. If your pet is properly prepared it may save you and your pet an additional visit. It is also very helpful for us to have copies of previous medical records or treatments.

Semiannual fecal exams are recommended for all pets. It is helpful if you can bring a fresh stool sample to your pet's wellness exam. A stool sample should be less than 24 hours old and kept refrigerated until you bring it. It is ok if grass, leaves, cat litter, etc. are in the sample. If you use clumping litter for your cat, please try to make sure the sample contains feces and is not just a clump of urine.

The Pet Health Center team at the KSU-VMTH looks forward to caring for your pet's health. We have special wellness package plans tailored to fit the needs of your new puppy/kitten or your senior pet. However, wellness exams at any age are a great way to provide the best possible care for your special friend! Please call between 8-5, M-F to schedule your wellness exam appointment: 785-532-5690.