A close-up photograph of a grey and white tabby kitten looking to the left, surrounded by purple and white flowers. The kitten is the central focus of the cover image.

Companion Animal Book

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Photo by: Heather Storbakken, Marshall County

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1.0 General Information

The Companion Animal State 4-H Show is an opportunity for South Dakota 4-H members to exhibit knowledge about their companion animal. Exhibitors must have shown at their county Achievement Days show in order to be eligible to show at the South Dakota State Fair.

ELIGIBLE COMPANION ANIMALS: At your county Achievement Days, any live Companion Animal exhibit may be shown if approved by your 4-H Youth Program Advisor and/or fairgrounds.

For the South Dakota State Fair, due to the limitations of housing and the distance that some exhibitors will have to travel, we are limiting companion animal participation to the following domesticated species of Companion Animals:

- Cat/Kitten
- Ferrets
- Chinchillas
- Gerbils
- Hamsters
- Mice & Rats
- Hedgehogs
- Pet Rabbits/Guinea Pigs/Cavies (These are animals that cannot be entered in the State 4-H Rabbit/Cavy Show due to breed disqualifications.)

AGE OF ANIMALS: All animals must be weaned prior to show. Minimum age of mammal companion animals are as follows:

- Cat/Kittens: 4 months
- Ferrets: 4 months
- Chinchillas: 7 weeks
- Guinea pigs: 4 weeks
- Gerbils, hamsters, mice, rats: 4 weeks
- Hedgehogs: 5 weeks
- Pet rabbits: 9 weeks

2.0. Exhibiting Companion Animals

2.1. South Dakota 4-H Exhibit Lots

- Cat/Kitten Showmanship
- Companion Animal Live Exhibit
- Companion Animal Display Exhibit

2.2. Guidelines for Exhibiting Companion Animals

- Sanctioning
 - o Companion Animal shows at county Achievement Days and at the South Dakota State Fair are not sanctioned by any national organization.
- Companion Animal Breeds
 - o Companion Animals do not need to be purebred animals. They will not be judged for breed characteristics. Companion Animals are judged for physical condition, cleanliness, presentation, temperament, and attractive or unusual appearance.
- Carriers and Kennels
 - o Exhibitors must provide their own pet carrier/portable kennel to transport and house their Companion Animals while on the fairgrounds.
- Health Certification
 - o Each exhibitor must have a current Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI) for each Companion Animal. The state veterinarian's office requires all Companion Animals being exhibited to be accompanied by a health certificate that has been signed by a licensed accredited veterinarian within 30 days of entry to the South Dakota State Fair. The health certificate must indicate the dates of vaccination for rabies and feline distemper (FVRCP). However, it is important for 4-H members to consult with their local veterinarian about complete health care for their cats, which includes additional

vaccinations, such as for feline leukemia. All vaccines must be current.

- Animal Possession Requirement
 - o Kittens/cats must be in possession of the exhibitor by May 31 of the current year.
- Animal's Length of Stay at Event
 - o Companion Animals may only be brought to South Dakota State Fair or Achievement Days on the day of the show and remain until all judging is completed. Housing will be provided for your convenience, upon our availability after the show for a limited amount of time. Details on the housing will be provided to exhibitors after State Fair registration closes.
- Entry Limits
 - o Each exhibitor is limited to two entries per lot number. Cat/Kitten Showmanship is limited to one entry.
- Control of Animals While Showing
 - o Companion Animals may be shown in or out of their cages, with the exception of cat/kitten showmanship in which the animal must be out of its carrier during showmanship and show.
 - o Each 4-H member needs to provide a carpet square to place under his/her Companion Animal while showing. Carpet squares should be at least 12" x 15".
 - o A leash or harness is required to control your Companion Animal if appropriate for species. Use a small, clean light-weight leash or harness. Tip: Practice this at home with your pet to get your Companion Animal used to wearing the leash or harness before the day of the show.
- Care of Companion Animals
 - o Companion Animals must have a clean and full water dish.
 - o Litter boxes are optional; however, be aware that Companion Animals may be in their carriers for several hours. It is advisable to feed cats several hours before the time of the show.
- Ribbons
 - o Ribbon placing follows the Danish system of purple, blue, red, and white.

2.3. Cat/Kitten Showmanship

Showmanship is a 4-H Youth-in-Action activity. The purpose of showmanship is for 4-H members to develop public presentation skills, showcase their

knowledge about the Companion Animal shown, and to present their animal to a showmanship judge and audience.

Showmanship provides 4-H members with a meaningful experience where they can practice and improve their handling and sportsmanship skills. Showmanship gives 4-H members the opportunity to present themselves and their cats to the best of their ability. It is important to remember that 4-H showmanship is not the same as professional showmanship in competitive events for purebred cats.

2.3.1. Tips on Cat Showmanship

1. Please relax. Remember, the more relaxed you are while handling your pet, the more calm and relaxed your cat will be. Everyone at the show is there because they love cats. You will not be criticized by anyone if you forget something or if your cat gets scared or nervous during the show. Everyone is here because they like cats and want to support you in your Companion Animal project!
2. Remember to handle your cat gently but with firmness (not too rough or too tight). The entire time you are showing the cat, you can stroke and soothe the cat with your hand. The more you practice, the more your cat will become accustomed to being shown.
3. Remember that this is a new and scary experience for your cat. If your cat scratches, growls, tries to escape, or fidgets, s/he is just being a cat. The judge will only take points away if you lose your temper or get rough with your cat. Stay calm and do the best you can. Smile! This is your kitty; show the judge that you are a proud of cat owner.

2.3.2. Procedures for Cat/Kitten Showmanship

Approaching the table

- Picking up your cat.
 - o Put one hand under the chest behind its forelegs. Grasp both hind legs and tail with your other hand.
- Carrying your cat.
 - o Always carry your cat in the safety carry. Grasp the cat's forelegs between your thumb and fingers, and have at least one finger between the cat's legs. Support the cat's chest in the palm of your hand. Then, with your opposite hand grasping the nape of the cat's neck, you may tuck the cat's rump and rear legs both

under your elbow and against your body or riding on your hip.

Presenting your cat

1. Pick up your cat with one hand just behind its front legs and one hand just in front of its back legs. Lift the cat up, stretching it out slightly so that the judge can see how long the cat is.
2. Show the judge the cat's side, then turn and show the cat's head, then turn and show the cat's other side, then turn and show the cat's behind. (Practice this several times so that the cat becomes familiar with being picked up like this, and so you can make the turns in a smooth fashion. Practice with your cat at a steady pace. Make the practice sessions short and more frequent, rather than having long sessions where your cat may start to resist and squirm.)
3. Put the cat down on the table facing the judge and lift the front of the cat up by gripping just behind the front legs. Hold your cat up tall with its back legs still on the table so that the judge can look at the cat's tummy. Put the cat's front legs back down on the table.

Examining your cat

1. Try to keep your cat turned sideways to the judge as you examine the cat. Most cats will huddle down with their tummy on the table. You can gently "tuck" the cat so that she looks like a compact loaf of bread, her paws underneath her and her tail curled around her.
2. Body parts.
 - a. The goal of this part of your presentation is to show the judge that you know the parts of a cat's body and what is typical of a healthy cat. One way to remember everything is to look at your cat—starting at the head, comment on each part as you work your way back to the cat's tail.
 - b. Start with the cat's head. Feel the skull, face, chin, and neck for any lumps or scratches or anything that should not be there. Talk to the judge as you do this. Now look at each of the cat's eyes and into each ear. Your cat's eyes should be clear without discharge, and its ears should be clean and free of ear mites, scratches, or discharge. You may say something like, "Now I am checking each eye; they look clear and bright. I am checking the

ears for mites, infection, or scratches; my cat's ears look fine."

- c. Continue to talk to the judge as you examine your cat. Tell the judge what you are looking for as you check each body part.
- d. Lift the lips on the side of your cat's face to expose her teeth for the judge's inspection. Do not force the cat to open its mouth.
- e. Next, examine the cat's body. Think of this as giving your cat a massage. As you do this, you are feeling for bones that are not right, for lumps, bumps, or cuts. Tell the judge what you are feeling for as you do this. Start at the neck and work toward the back. Feel under the jaw and the neck, the shoulders, the body, the tummy, and each leg. Also look at all four paws.
- f. Lift the tail and check the cat's backside. You are looking for anything wrong—e.g., blood or a dirty bottom—that could indicate diarrhea.
- g. Comment on your cat's weight. If you can feel the bones easily, the cat is probably too skinny. If you feel lots of rolls of fat and loose skin, your cat could be overweight. A nice, firm body that doesn't feel bony is just right.
- h. Brush the fur back on your cat so the judge can see her skin. Comment on the color of the skin and if there is any dry or irritated skin.
- i. Do the pinch test to make sure the cat is not dehydrated. If you pull or pinch a fold of skin up and it goes s-l-o-w-l-y back in place, the cat may be dehydrated.
- j. Brush the fur back, then forward into place. Blow on the fur so it fans out from the skin. Comment on the fur. Is the fur soft? Is the cat shedding? Is its hair matted?
- k. Put your cat back into the "bread loaf" position—the cat sideways to the judge, tucked up, legs underneath, and tail curled. Stand straight and tell the judge you are done examining your cat.

2.3.3. Your Appearance for 4-H Showmanship

- You should appear presentable for the show. Dress and look nice when you are showing your cat. Be sure that your hands are clean, as the judge will be watching your hands as you show the different body parts of your cat. Wearing colored nail polish is not acceptable.

- Your hair should be nicely combed and pulled back if it is long.
- Wear either the 4-H t-shirt or a white shirt or blouse with either short or long sleeves.
- Wear closed-toed shoes or boots. No sandals or flip-flops.

2.3.4. Responding to the Judge's Questions

Learn as much as you can about your cat. Things to know:

- When your cat was born (the year and the time of year)
- How old is your cat?
- Your cat's gender (male or female) and if it has been spayed or neutered
- What your cat eats
- Any special characteristics (examples are being a good mouser, being scared of loud noises, etc.)
- Study curriculum or other resources about kittens and cats (including the body parts diagram contained in this publication). Included in this publication is a study guide sheet for each age division (Beginner, Junior, and Senior).

Beginners

- What are some signs of a healthy cat? (or) How do you know when your cat is sick?
- How many bones does a cat have?
- How long does a mother cat carry the kittens before they are born?

Juniors

- What vaccinations does your cat need?
- What are mother and father cats called?
- How many calories does your cat or kitten need every day?
- How long will the average cat live?
- What are some characteristics of a "fixed" cat?
- What is special about a cat's tongue?

Seniors

- What are the symptoms of rabies? (Alternative diseases/maladies that may be asked about: panleukopenia, chlamydia, rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, feline leukemia.)
- What diseases/illnesses does "fixing" your cat either prevent or reduce the chances of?
- When and where were cats domesticated?
- What is the flehmen reaction?
- Why is protein (or fat or carbohydrates) important

in a cat's diet?

- What are some signs a female cat is in heat?
- Why are there often kittens of different colors in the same litter?
- What is the normal body temperature of a cat?

2.4 Companion Animal Live Exhibit

2.4.1 Preparing For The Show

- A Certificate of Veterinary Inspection is required for all companion animals. A rabies vaccination is required for ferrets and cats.
- Check for external and internal parasites. Animals can't be shown if they have any parasite present.
- Learn more about your pet: Where is it from originally? What does it eat naturally? What is the best way to care for it?
- Prepare your presentation
 - o Start on this a few weeks before the fair
 - o Practice handling your pet so it's comfortable
- Have your parents or friends ask you questions about your pet to prepare for answering the judge's questions
- Clean your pet's enclosure regularly, but make sure to tidy it up before you attend the show
- Trim toenails or wings if needed

2.4.2 Preparing Your Presentation

As part of the show, you will give a short presentation about your pet. Here are some ideas about what to include:

- Your name and age
- Pet's name, species, age, and coloring
- Where does your pet come from? What are some characteristics of its natural environment?
- Discuss your pet's overall appearance and health
- How you care for your pet
- How often and how you clean its cage
- What health treatments your pet requires
- What your pet eats and how much you feed it
- How often you groom it
- How did you prepare for show
- Something special about your pet

2.4.3 Show Procedure

- Exhibitors must be present during the specified vet check-in times to be eligible to show their animals in the Companion Animal Show. Exhibitors that miss the scheduled check-in time will be ineligible to show and their animal will not be permitted on the grounds.

- Animals must be housed in an appropriate cage or carrier at all times during the show unless asked to remove them by the judge. If being shown in a travel cage, exhibitors should bring photographs of the Companion Animal's normal habitat.
- Each exhibitor will be asked to give a short showmanship presentation on his/her animal. The characteristics, health, and care of the animal should be provided in this presentation. Following the presentation, exhibitors will be interviewed on knowledge of their animal and its care.
- The judge will evaluate the participant on the following criteria:
 - o animal health and well-being – 30 points
 - o cage evaluation (appropriateness of travel housing as well as description of everyday housing) – 25 points
 - o overall knowledge and presentation skills – 45 points
- See 4-H Companion Animal Judging Sheet for more complete breakdown of points available.
- Participant should bring animal, adequate cage and accessories, completed Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI), and pictures of normal domesticated habitat, if appropriate.

2.5 Companion Animal Display Exhibit

In place of showing a live animal, exhibitors can make a presentation with visual aids to display their knowledge of their Companion Animal. For example, exhibitors can make a poster with information on the proper care of a companion animal that they did not bring in person to the Companion Animal Show. Judging of the displays will take place during the Companion Animal show. Exhibitors must be present at time of judging and will be judged on quality of the display, accuracy of information provided, and ability of the exhibitor to explain the information and answer the judge's questions.

Exhibitors should prepare the information they will share in their presentation as if the live animal were present. Refer to the previous section for information on what to include in your presentation.

3.0 Study Guides

The following pages include some study materials for you to prepare for your Companion Animal project area. In addition to the information included here, we encourage you to seek out information about the proper care and health of your Companion Animal.

http://articles.extension.org/companion_animals – Extension website with articles concerning the care of Companion Animals as well as careers associated with Companion Animals.

<https://shop4-h.org/products/pet-curriculum-1-pet-pals> – National 4-H Pet Curriculum

<https://shop4-h.org/products/cat-curriculum-1-purrfect-pals> – National 4-H Cat Curriculum

https://ohio4h.org/sites/ohio4h/files/d6/files/publications/documents/SelfDetermined/365_13_Reptiles_Amphibians_2015.pdf – Ohio State Extension Fact Sheet on Reptiles

<https://ohio4h.org/sites/ohio4h/files/imce/365.22%20Pigeons.pdf> – Ohio State Extension Fact Sheet on Pigeons

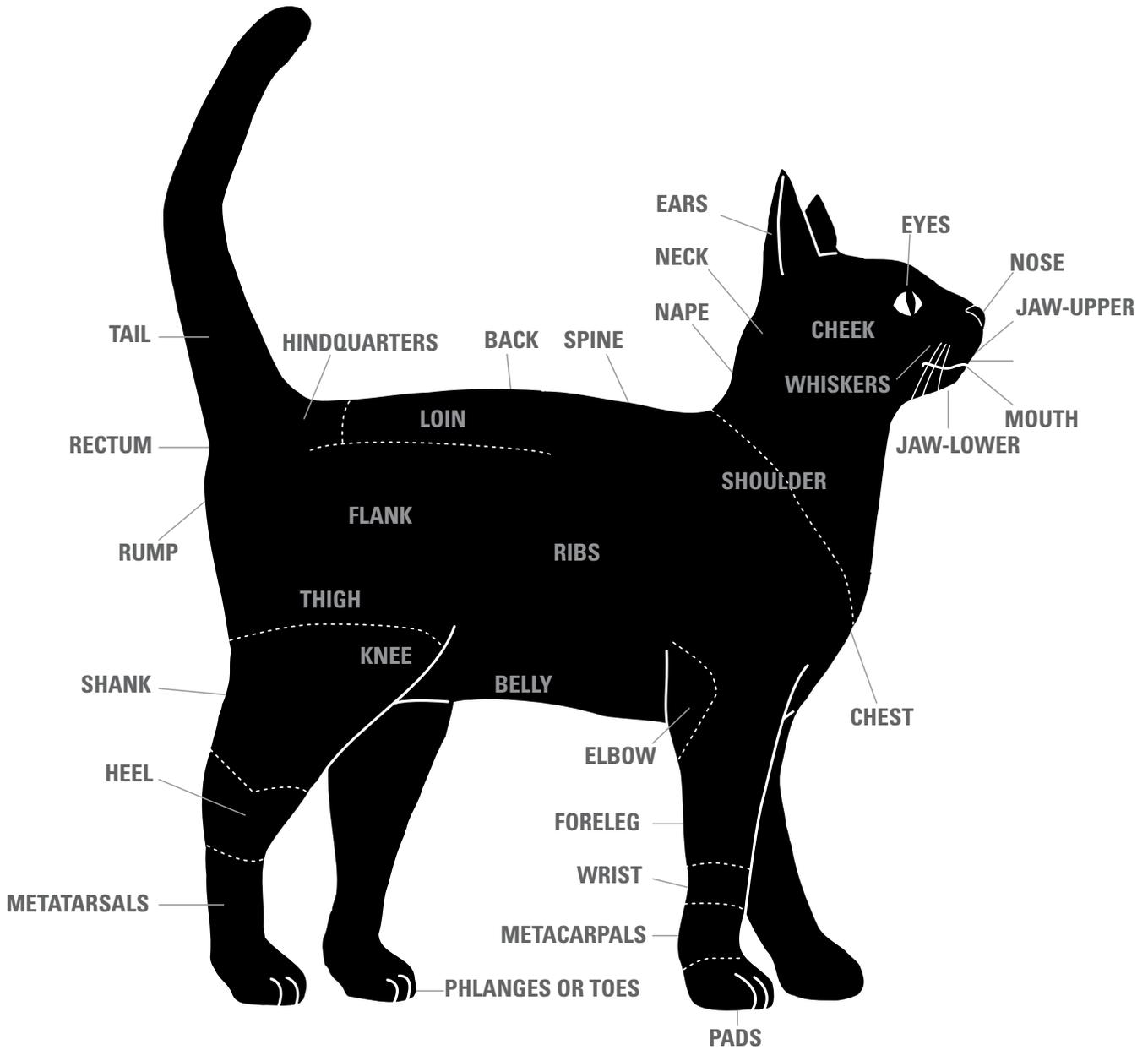
<https://ohio4h.org/sites/ohio4h/files/imce/books/resources/Curriculum/365.26%20Hedgehogs.pdf> – Ohio State Extension Fact Sheet on Hedgehogs

<https://ohio4h.org/sites/ohio4h/files/imce/365.27%20Ferrets.pdf> – Ohio State Extension Fact Sheet on Hedgehogs

<https://ohio4h.org/sites/ohio4h/files/imce/365.28%20Chinchillas.pdf> – Ohio State Extension Fact Sheet on Chinchillas

3.1.0 Parts of a Cat

It is important to know the names of the parts of a cat's body. This is helpful in telling your parents or veterinarian how your cat is feeling or behaving. Below is a diagram of a cat's body parts.



3.1. Study Guide for Beginners (Ages 8-10)

Health

- A cat needs current vaccinations every year, as recommended by your veterinarian.
- If you do not want to have kittens, a cat must be neutered or spayed.
 - o A female cat is spayed (the uterus and ovaries are removed)
 - o A male cat is neutered/castrated (the testicles are removed)
- A healthy cat has the following qualities and characteristics:
 - o has bright, clean eyes
 - o has a glossy coat
 - o has a clean nose
 - o has a good appetite
 - o has a nice pink tongue and gums
 - o is curious and playful
 - o uses a litter box daily

Physical Characteristics

- A cat stands on the tips of its toes (like a ballerina).
- The whiskers are used to help sense things.
- Cats can live as long as 20 years with proper care and nutrition.
- Cats have 244 bones.
- Shedding is when a cat sheds its coat in the spring and the fall—it is renewing its coat for the season change.

Nutrition

- Milk can cause diarrhea, so give only in very small amounts as a treat, not as a regular part of the diet.
- Use common sense for food amounts. If your cat is heavy, feed less. If your cat is too thin, feed more.
- Do not feed dog food to your cat (dog food does not contain enough fat).
- Occasional use of table scraps is OK, but do not use every day, and use in small amounts.
- Best food combination is a dry cat food with small amounts of canned cat food – or dry food alone.

Reproduction

- A female cat carries kittens for about 2 months before they are born.
- Kittens open their eyes 9 or 10 days after birth.

3.2. Study Guide for Juniors (Ages 10-13)

Health

- A cat needs current vaccinations every year as recommended by your veterinarian. Ask your veterinarian about these vaccines:
 - o rabies
 - o panleukopenia (pan-luke-o-pea-nee-a)
 - o chlamydia (cla-media)
 - o rhinotracheitis (rhino-tra-key-mee-ya)
 - o calicivirus (ca-lee-che-virus)
 - o feline leukemia (feline lou-key-mee-ya)
- Signs that your cat may be sick:
 - o It is hiding.
 - o It is unresponsive, not playful, and/or not curious.
 - o It has dull, mattery eyes
 - o Its coat is dry and coarse or matted.
 - o It has an increased or decreased appetite.
 - o Its litter box habits have changed, or it is making frequent trips to the litter box.
 - o Its gums and/or tongue are pale or whitish.
 - o It is crying or howling.
 - o It has diarrhea.
- A neutered or “fixed” cat is
 - o less likely to wander,
 - o less likely to get into fights,
 - o healthier,
 - o quieter (less yowling).

Physical Characteristics

- The average cat lives 12–15 human years.
- A cat ages differently from a human. There is no accurate way to calculate age, however, an approximate way to figure the age of a cat (compared to you, a human) is to figure that a cat is about 15 human years old at the end of its first year, nine more years at the end of its second year. Every year thereafter it ages an average of 4 years. For example:

For a 7-year-old cat	First year =	15 years
	Second year =	9 years
	Next 5 years (5 x 4) =	20 years
	Total	44 years

- Whiskers supplement the vision and hearing of a cat by helping sense the width of openings and changes in the environment.
- The teeth are designed for biting and tearing food, not for chewing.
- The tongue is specialized. It is made to hold prey,

lick meat from bones, and can curl for lapping up liquids.

- A cat has very good hearing. It can hear sounds two octaves higher than humans.
- Cats have a good sense of smell. A cat's brain center for smell is large.

Nutrition

- A cat needs about 1 pint of fresh water per day. They like it best when it is clean and cool in a glass or ceramic dish and in a separate place from the food.
- Most pet cats do not get enough exercise, so diet (type and amount) is very important to maintain the best weight.
- Kittens need about 400–500 calories per day.
- Adult cats need about 350 calories per day to maintain a good weight.
- It is important to read the labels on the cat food to make sure your cat is getting the right nutrients.
- A cat has kittens in 63–69 days.

Reproduction

- A queen is a mother cat; she has a litter of kittens.
- A tom is a father cat.
- To identify the sex of a kitten, look under its tail:
 - The backside of a female will look like an "i" (a hole and a slit).
 - The backside of a male will look like a ":" (two holes).
- Fixed cats are healthier because the body concentrates on staying healthy instead of reproduction. Also, there is nearly a zero chance of developing certain health problems, such as cancers of the reproductive system.

3.3. Study Guide for Seniors (Ages 14-18)

Health

- Rabies is a viral disease of the nervous system; the disease is passed from mammal to mammal (usually from skunks) and it is always fatal within 7-10 days. Signs are a change in attitude, irritability, erratic behavior, excessive salivation, uncoordinated muscle movements, and weakness—which leads to paralysis. Rabies can be passed to humans.
 - The rabies vaccine should be administered annually to all cats.
- Panleukopenia, or cat distemper, is a viral infection of the digestive system. It is almost always fatal.

Signs are diarrhea, vomiting, weight loss, fever, and depression.

- Chlamydia is a serious upper respiratory infection. Symptoms include red, mattery eyes, sneezing, and nasal discharge.
- Calicivirus is a viral infection that leads to upper-respiratory diseases. Signs include sneezing, red, mattery eyes, discharge from the mouth, coughing, fever, weight loss, and a runny nose.
- Rhinotracheitis is an acute infection of the respiratory tract and eyes, often leading to blindness. Symptoms include sneezing, red, mattery eyes, fever, weight loss, and a runny nose.
- Feline leukemia is a contagious virus that shows itself as a wasting disease. Feline leukemia eventually kills the cat's resistance to antibiotics, infections, and tumors. An infected cat may have wounds that do not heal.
- Normal cat temperature is 101–102 degrees F.

Physical characteristics

- Cats mark territory in the following ways:
 - Un-neutered males will back up and spray urine (called spraying).
 - By scratching things.
 - By rubbing their head and nose against something.
- Scratching is also used to sharpen the claws.
- Rubbing their head and nose against someone is also sign of affection.
- Cat's eyes have a third eyelid called the nictitating membrane—a pale, skin-like structure inside the inner corner of each eye whose purpose it is to remove dirt and debris by automatically sweeping across the eye when the eyelid is shut.
- The erect earflap of the ear is called the pinna. It catches sound waves and funnels them to the eardrums. Pinna are flexible, point forward, and can move sideways and back.
- The Jacobson's organ is a small pouch at the back of the roof of the mouth that is lined with receptor cells. It is used to detect smells.
- When a cat holds its mouth half open it is called flehmen response; the cat is identifying smells with its Jacobson's organ.
- A cat has a double set of vocal cords and can make 75–100 different sounds.
- Cats do not sweat; they cool down by radiating heat from the tongue, nose, and footpads.

- A cat's body should have good balance. Balance refers to the body conformation. It includes the body type, head type, bone structure, facial type, coat length and types, colors and patterns, and other physical features. Balance and proportion are of greater importance than any single physical feature of your cat.

Nutrition

- Protein is required for proper growth, for regulating body systems, for heat, and for energy.
 - Kittens need 30–35% of their diet from protein-rich foods
 - Adult cats need 20–25% of their diet to be protein
- Carbohydrates are needed to provide energy.
 - About one-third (33%) of the diet should be carbohydrates.
 - Carbohydrates need to be cooked because uncooked starch is difficult for cats to digest and can cause diarrhea.
- Fats are a source of heat and energy, improve skin condition, tone the nervous system, and are important for resisting disease.
 - Kittens need 25–30% of their diet to be fats. (Fat are an excellent source of calories for kittens.)
 - Adult cats need 20% of their diet to be fats.
 - A low-fat diet for a healthy cat can lead to decreased resistance to disease and dry, scaly skin.

Reproduction

- A newborn kitten weighs about one-fourth of a pound.
- The first substance a kitten drinks from its mother is called colostrum. Colostrum provides immunity against disease until the kitten can build its own resistances. The mother produces colostrum for 2–3 days and then begins producing regular milk.
- A queen will go through a heat cycle (when it is receptive to mating), which lasts 7–10 days. Symptoms of a cat in heat:
 - Calls or yowls loudly.
 - Rubs against everything.
 - Its vulva becomes enlarged and reddens.
- A queen can mate with several different toms during its heat. A kitten will look like its father, which can result in several different colored kittens in one litter.
- When a tom senses a queen is in heat, he will be increasingly belligerent and aggressive.
- A tomcat penis has small papillae (barbs), which ensures that the mating will be successful. The barbs cause the queen to release her eggs.
- Neutered males have a decreased risk of prostate problems and cancers and no risk of testicular cancer or other testicular problems.
- Spayed females have a decreased risk of breast cancer and no risk of ovarian and uterine cancers or other ovarian/uterine problems.
- Kittens can be fixed as young as 8 weeks old. The younger they are when fixed, the quicker they recover.