**The Greatest Gift**

Happy end of 2019! With this year ending and 2020 starting lots of families will adopt puppies and kittens. We all know to take our pets to the veterinarian when they are sick, but did you know they need to go when they are healthy as well? This is especially true for kittens and puppies. Your veterinarian is the best source for information regarding your pet’s health care and emotional well-being.

For starters, your puppy or kitten will need immunizations to protect it from certain diseases. These vaccinations are started around 8 weeks of age and will continue every 3-4 weeks until about 16 weeks of age. This is necessary to build up the immune system to prevent viruses and diseases. Your breeder or rescue may have given some vaccinations to your pet prior to adoption but the veterinarian will be able to guide you as to whether boosters are necessary and which vaccines are recommended based on your pet’s lifestyle.

During your pet’s examination, the veterinarian will ensure your pet is growing properly and maintaining a healthy weight. At that first visit a nutritional consult will be done to assess if the current diet is appropriate and how much should be fed. A fecal sample should be brought along to check for any parasites and a deworming schedule will be provided as most puppies and kittens will be diagnosed with at least one intestinal parasite by 6 months of age.

In addition, their teeth will be assessed to make sure they are losing teeth appropriately. One of the most common dental issues seen in pediatric patients are retained teeth. This occurs when the baby teeth do not fall out when the permanent tooth comes in. One of the problems with retained teeth is that because the teeth are so close together tartar will build up between them and even more concerning is that the permanent teeth are not able to come in at the appropriate spot which causes misalignment of the teeth. With this there is a risk of the jaw not being able to close properly. This can also cause teeth to rub together or even cause holes in the roof of the mouth if a lower tooth comes in at the wrong angle.

The first 16 weeks of a puppy’s or kitten’s life are the most important as far as developing emotional wellness and stability. During your first puppy/kitten visit we will discuss how to train your pet, how to prevent the most common behavior issues, and if there are already behavior issues how to address them. We try to make these visits fun and enjoyable for your newest family member.

Not only do these visits keep your pet healthy and ensure your pet is growing properly, your pet is also getting socialized. He or she is meeting new people and going to a new environment. This helps prevent fear of unknown people and places and if they are comfortable visiting when they feel good it makes it less stressful for them if they eventually have to come in when they are sick. Besides, lets face it- we just love seeing your adorable new babies!