



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contacts:

Heather Loenser, DVM
Chief Medical Officer
American Animal Hospital Association
heather.loenser@aaha.org
303-883-8318

Ashley Castore
Marketing Coordinator
American Association of Feline Practitioners
media@catvets.com
908-359-9351

AAHA and AAFP Release Updated Feline Life Stage Guidelines to the Veterinary Community

The joint release provides an extension of the heavily referenced 2010 Feline Life Stage Guidelines.

[LAKEWOOD, CO; BRIDGEWATER, NJ; March 2, 2021] Two of the world's leading veterinary organizations are proud to announce updated recommendations in the *2021 AAHA/AAFP Feline Life Stage Guidelines*. The American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) convened a Task Force of experts in feline medicine to define distinct feline life stages and provide a framework for individualized healthcare plans.

Understanding a cat's life stage and lifestyle greatly impacts healthcare strategies. Veterinary professionals have a responsibility to stress the need for ongoing care for feline patients at every stage of their lives. The updated Guidelines detail the evolution of feline biology and lifestyle over time, requiring different approaches to healthcare for kittens and senior cats.

The Guidelines outline four age-related life stages, with the fifth, end-of-life stage, occurring at any age.

Feline Life Stages

- Kitten: Birth up to 1 year
- Young adult: 1 to 6 years

- Mature adult: 7 to 10 years
- Senior: 10 years and older
- End-of-life: Any age

The Guidelines combine feline-friendly care approaches with a lifelong healthcare plan to improve health and wellbeing. “A cat-friendly approach tailored to the individual patient creates a more positive experience for the patient, client, and care provider, and promotes more frequent visits and improved compliance,” stated Task Force Co-Chair, Jessica Quimby, DVM, PhD, DACVIM.

Quick reference tables are included in the Guidelines to aid veterinary professionals in developing evolving care plans that grow with cats as they age. “All cats of every life stage need full, thorough physical examinations at least annually for the best lifelong care; and we recommend checkups at a minimum of every six months for senior cats,” said AAHA Chief Medical Officer Heather Loenser, DVM. “The Guidelines provide discussion items and medical history questions for all life stages, as well as life stage-specific focal points for physical examinations, claw care, litter box management, nutrition, behavior, oral health, enrichment, and vaccinations.”

Additionally, for veterinary teams, the Feline Lifestyle Assessment Form helps gather a deeper history for each cat. This form makes it easier to tailor the physical examination and to identify specific questions and discussions based on the client’s feedback.

Supplemental client resources accompanying the Guidelines include the new *Your Cat’s Life Stages* brochure, and an updated Feline Life Stages chart, which are useful educational tools to set clients up for success in managing their cat’s wellbeing.

The *2021 AAHA/AAFP Feline Life Stage Guidelines* are online at aaha.org/felinelifestage and catvets.com/life-stage. Cat owner resources are available at catfriendly.com/life-stages.

Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health USA Inc., CareCredit, Dechra Veterinary Products, IDEXX Laboratories, Inc., Merck Animal Health, and Zoetis Petcare supported the development of the *2021 AAHA/AAFP Feline Life Stage Guidelines* and resources through an educational grant to AAHA.

###

About AAHA

Since 1933, the American Animal Hospital Association has been the only organization to accredit veterinary hospitals throughout the United States and Canada according to more than 900 standards directly correlated to high-quality medicine and compassionate care. Accreditation in veterinary medicine is voluntary. The AAHA-accredited logo is the best way to know a practice has been evaluated by a third-party. Look for the AAHA logo or visit aaha.org.

About the American Association of Feline Practitioners

The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) improves the health and welfare of cats by supporting high standards of practice, continuing education, and evidence-based medicine (catvets.com). As a trusted leader in the veterinary community, the AAFP has a long-standing reputation and track record for facilitating high standards, including guidelines for practice excellence and educational resources. Over the years, the AAFP has encouraged veterinary professionals to continuously re-evaluate preconceived notions of practice strategies in an effort to advance the quality

of feline medicine practiced. Launched in 2012, the Cat Friendly Practice® (CFP) Program (catvets.com/cfp) was created to improve the treatment, handling, and overall healthcare provided to cats. Its purpose is to equip veterinary practices, teams, and individuals with the tools and resources to reduce stress associated with the visit and elevate the standard of care provided to cats. Launched in 2020, the Cat Friendly Certificate Program (catvets.com/certificate) now provides this education to individual veterinary professionals. Catfriendly.com, or Cat Friendly Homes, is the AAFP's cat caregiver educational resource which is powered by feline veterinarians and includes a monthly newsletter, The Cat Column.