ANIMALS · CATS

The Barn Cat Care Calendar

Nobody forgets to feed the cats. What slips is everything else. Pin this up in the feed room and work through it as the seasons come around, and your mousers will spend the year hunting instead of getting over something.

EVERY MONTH

- **Look in every cat's ears.** Ten seconds each. Dark, crumbly, coffee-ground debris means mites. Treat the whole group the same day, plus the barn dog.
- **Run a hand down her side.** You want to feel ribs easily and not see them. A cat losing flesh in the fall will not hold through winter.
- **Apply the topical dose** if you run monthly prevention. One product usually covers roundworm, hookworm, fleas, and often ear mites.
- **Count heads at feeding.** This is how you catch a limp, or somebody missing, while you can still do something about it.

EVERY QUARTER (IF NOT DOSING MONTHLY)

- **Broad-spectrum dewormer, four times a year.** Tie it to the season change so it actually gets done.
- **Praziquantel if they hunt.** Pyrantel alone does nothing to tapeworm, which is what rodent-eaters carry.
- **Fecal test on one or two cats,** at least twice a year, to see what the group is carrying.

ONCE A YEAR

- **Rabies and distemper** for every cat you can handle or trap.
- **Spay or neuter anything new.** Check for a squared-off left ear tip first, which means it is already done.

WORTH KEEPING ON THE SHELF

- Cat-labeled spot-on, enough for everybody at once.
- A dewormer with praziquantel on the panel.
- More straw than you think you need.
- Ear cleaner and cotton balls, never swabs.
- A heated water bowl, bought before you need it.
- A humane trap, borrowed or owned.

SPRING · MAR TO MAY

- Start flea and tick prevention. Cat-labeled products only.
- Barn queens litter now. Deworm kittens from two weeks, every two weeks until eight.
- Get your hands on those kittens daily. The window where kittens come to trust people shuts hard at eight weeks.
- Confine cats during songbird fledging if you keep feeders.

SUMMER · JUN TO AUG

- Shade and water in every building they use.
- Watch for fight wounds and abscesses from summer squabbles over territory.
- Check feeders for kibble gone solid in the damp.

FALL · SEP TO NOV

- **Straw in the shelters, never hay.** CRITICAL
- Box roughly 2 ft × 3 ft, raised 4 to 6 in, entrance 6 to 8 in.
- Heated water bowl running before the first hard freeze.
- More food and more fat. Staying warm burns both.

WINTER · DEC TO FEB

- Refresh straw every few weeks. Damp straw is worse than no straw at all.
- Check water twice daily.
- Ear checks matter most now, with everybody piled together to stay warm.

THREE THINGS THAT KILL BARN CATS

- **Permethrin.** It is in a lot of dog flea products. Cats cannot break it down and it kills them. Read the ingredient panel every single time.
- **Antifreeze.** It tastes sweet, cats will drink it, and a very small amount shuts down their kidneys. Clean up spills and check for leaks.
- **Warm engine bays.** Cats climb in to get warm. Bang on the hood and look underneath before you start anything that sat out cold.