



## **SOUTHAMPTON BOARD OF HEALTH**

### **TRANSFER STATION**

### **WASTE DISPOSAL FOR CAT'S TREATED WITH I-131**

#### **GUIDELINES FOR CAT OWNERS AFTER RADIOIODINE THERAPY**

Cats treated with radioiodine (I-131) have a low level of radioactivity following discharge from the hospital. This level is sufficiently low that complete isolation of the cat from people is not required. Follow these guidelines for 3 weeks after your cat comes home to eliminate or further reduce human exposure to radiation that is emitted by the cat and by radioiodine that is excreted by the cat in urine and saliva.

---Do not allow your cat to sit on or sleep with anyone after coming home. Spend as little time as possible close to your cat. Casual contact is fine, but prolonged lap sitting and sleeping in your bed should be avoided. You can relax these guidelines for yourself after the second week, but not for young children or women who are pregnant or might become pregnant.

---As an extra safety precaution for the very young and developing fetuses, children under 10-years-old and pregnant woman should avoid contact with your cat, food dishes, toys and litter for the full 3 weeks.

---Wash your hands with soap and water after touching your cat or anything the cat has been in contact (e.g. food dishes, toys, bedding, and especially the litter box). When cats groom themselves saliva contaminates their hair coat, which can then contaminate dishes and other objects.

---If possible, use flushable litter for the next 3 weeks. Otherwise use scoopable litter and collect all waste in a sturdy container lined with two plastic bags (one placed inside the other). Store waste in a well-ventilated space away from your primary living areas, and hold for an additional 2 weeks so natural decay will reduce radioactivity to background levels. Then the litter may be disposed with the normal trash. Landfills do not allow the disposal of low-level radioactive waste and are equipped with sensitive radiation detectors. You may be charged over \$1000 if radioactivity is detected in your cat's litter at the landfill.

---Please use extra care when cleaning the litter box to avoid getting soiled litter on your hands. Use disposable plastic gloves and litter box liners to help prevent contamination. Wash with soap



and water after cleaning the litter box. All used disposable gloves should be stored with the waste—treat them as if they are contaminated.

---Please keep your cat indoors if the cat uses garden areas as a litter box. Cats may go outside for supervised exercise.

---Do not allow your cat to eat from your plate or walk on counter tops where food is prepared. If the cat does or you are not sure, then put on disposable gloves and thoroughly wash the area with soap and water before preparing food.

---Items that your cat routinely contacts (e.g. bedding, toys) should be thoroughly washed with soap and water prior to handling them without disposable gloves.

---If your cat salivates on hard surfaces, then these areas should be cleaned often with soap and water, or a spray cleaner (e.g. Formula409). For surfaces that are difficult to clean (e.g. couches and upholstered chairs) cover these surfaces with a towel or blanket and replace as necessary. These towels and blankets should be washed separately from your clothing using standard laundry detergents.

---If your cat vomits a hairball, put on disposable plastic gloves and dispose of the material with the waste litter or flush down the toilet. Next, clean the area with soap and water or spray cleaners.

---If your cat needs emergency care within the first 3 weeks of coming home, then advise the veterinary staff that your cat has recently undergone radioiodine therapy.

---After a month (typically after your first recheck appointment with your veterinarian) you can resume all normal routines and assume that all hazards associated with radioiodine treatment are gone.

COURTESY OF CORNELL UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL FOR ANIMALS

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