



HOME CARE FOR YOUR CAT

DIET

Kittens and cats should be fed 2 to 3 times a day. You can switch to adult cat food at 1 year of age. Canned cat food is preferred over dry cat food, as the canned food is lower in carbohydrates and less calorie dense. Feeding canned food helps to prevent a variety of health problems seen regularly in cats such as obesity, urinary tract disease, kidney disease and diabetes. Please note that a diet that is labeled as “grain free” is NOT necessarily carbohydrate free. Indoor cats tend to gain weight more easily. This can predispose them to joint problems, diabetes, and liver disease. We recommend the following food companies because of their knowledge of pet nutrition and their quality control: Science Diet, Royal Canin, Iams and Purina.

Cats who go outdoors get vital exercise and mental stimulation by hunting all day long. Indoor cats need a replacement for all this activity. For fun and exercise, both extremely important to your indoor cat’s health, we recommend putting small amounts of dry food or treats in various hiding places (high places, closets, boxes and bags, under towels or pieces of tissue paper). You can also put treats or dry food in “treat puzzles” (you can make some by cutting holes in soda bottles and cardboard containers).

Some cats have strong preferences for either canned food or dry food, and most cats hate change! Diet changes should be done gradually (over about a week), and if a cat is completely refusing to eat a new food, the old diet should be given. Fasting can be very dangerous for cats.

ENRICHMENT

Two kittens will play together all day long, in between frequent naps. If you have a single kitten, you need to provide a lot of play time! Play is extremely satisfying to a cat, and greatly reduces stress as well. Your new kitten will adapt somewhat to your schedule, sleeping when you are out and (hopefully!) while you are sleeping. The rest of the time, they will want to play or cuddle with you, so you need to find some easy ways to interact with them for maximum satisfaction of this instinct.

Cat toys: There are a huge variety of toys for cats to amuse themselves with: Catnip stuffed mice, small balls, etc. Cats respond really well to “fishing pole” type toys: toys with a stick and a string or wire with a toy or feather at the end. These toys allow you to entertain and exercise the cat without the handler getting scratched or bitten. We particularly recommend the following toys made by Go Cat: the Cat Catcher, Da Bee and Da Ball. These can be ordered online. Chien de Luxe is a local pet boutique has a great selection of cat products.

Cats love paper bags (always cut off the handles!), cardboard boxes, tissue paper, cat trees (well worth the expense) and hiding places. Cats need to climb and love to be up high. Vertical spaces allow them to observe from a safe place, survey their environment, and get away from each other, if desired. For more information and ideas on providing enrichment, go to the following website: <https://www.aspcapro.org/resource/saving-lives-behavior-enrichment/5-free-or-darn-close-feline-enrichment-ideas>

CLAWING FURNITURE

Cats need scratching posts! Different cats prefer different types so you might have to try a few different ones. Most cats like sisal or cardboard although some prefer wood, fabric or carpet. Cats may prefer to scratch vertical, diagonal or horizontal surfaces. You may need to try more than one kind, and the more the better around your house!

A scratching post must be substantial enough to not move when the cat uses it. It should be located in an area the cat is comfortable in and spends time in. If a cat is already clawing the furniture, put the scratching post in that area. Rub a little catnip into it and reward your cat with treats for using it. If you have multiple cats, you definitely need multiple scratching posts.

Most cats do not need to have their nails trimmed. They shed the outer layer of the claw periodically. If you wish to keep them short for your own protection, (or to slightly decrease the damage to your furniture) we can show you how. Kittens have a tendency to climb everything (drapes, pants legs, bare legs) but they generally stop doing this as they get older.

LITTER BOX CARE

The litter box is an essential part of your cat's environment, and problems associated with it can be very difficult to live with. It is therefore essential that you try to prevent them, and equally important that you call us as soon as possible if your cat isn't using the box. These are the basic rules:

- The box should be as large as possible (at least 1 ½ times the length of the cat from nose to base of tail)
- The box should not be in a noisy, hard to reach, or unpleasant part of the house. When in doubt, add more litter boxes to the environment.
- Multiple cats need multiple boxes.
- Covered litter boxes are NOT recommended. They have little air flow, they trap odors, and they can be awkward to get in and out of. They are also harder to clean, and, therefore, are usually cleaned less often.
- Most cats prefer fine, CLUMPING, UNSCENTED, UNDEODORIZED litter. Litters are scented for humans, not for cats!
- The box should be scooped ONCE A DAY and completely dumped out once a month (or more often).

Call immediately if your cat ever appears to be unable to urinate. This can indicate a life-threatening emergency.

EAR CARE

Feline ears are very sensitive and easily inflamed. We do not recommend cleaning them or putting anything in them unless this is recommended by a veterinarian. A little gray or tan wax is not uncommon, and should be left alone. Kittens do occasionally have ear mites. If your kitten is constantly scratching at its ears, please schedule an appointment.