



THE NEW CAT

IN

YOUR HOME

How to keep your cat safe, healthy and happy

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Chapter 1 - Keeping a Happy Cat

So you are planning to adopt or foster a new cat or kitten — Congratulations! Cats make wonderful companions! Here are some of our personal recommendations for keeping your new cat or kitten and your household safe, happy and healthy.

Things to think about before you adopt a cat or a kitten

- **Lifetime care of a cat** requires a long commitment in years and should be a **thoughtful consideration**. A healthy, well-cared-for cat can live to be 20 or **even over 30 years old!**
- **Cat Gifting:** we **do not recommend** offering a cat or kitten as a **gift for another** person — Most people prefer to choose a pet for themselves, especially given how many years of love and care this can involve. Cats have individual personalities and making the right match between adopter and cat must be the overriding consideration.
- **Cats & Kids**

Please remember to **supervise** young or inexperienced kids with cats and kittens in order to prevent injury to the cat or the child. Cats and kittens who are teased or hurt may learn to bite or scratch to defend themselves.

You can teach kids to handle, play with, stroke and pick cats up properly. For starters, it's best to have the child sit down next to the cat. See "How to Pick up a Cat Properly" on YouTube, from VetStreet.com.

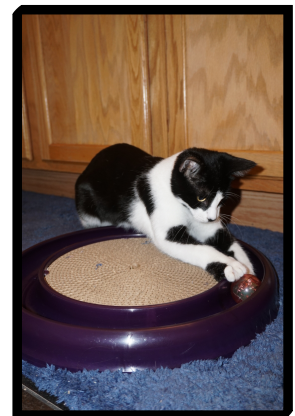


*Pictured left, Feline Flyer by Cats Claws, interactive toy available at Petco.
Right: Most cats love the Star Chaser Turbo Scratcher by Bergan!*



• **Play** is an important part of an indoor cat's life. It simulates hunting outdoors. **Always play with a cat or kitten only with a toy**, not with your hands. Hands should be used only for petting, stroking and picking up the cat. This simple guideline will help prevent unwanted prey-type behavior, such as scratching or biting human hands.

Nike works out on his Turbo Scratcher!



- **Cats require a lot of sleep.** Please respect your cats' need for sleep, which can be 85 or more percent of the day (18-20 hours). All cats, both adults and kittens, need frequent time-out from play for sleep. Visit www.catster.com, A Guide to the Feline Sleep Cycle.

The Basics

It's important to have the following basic items on hand when you bring your new cat home.

- **Cat Carrier:** should be large enough for an adult cat to sit up inside it. Sturdy plastic or metal is durable and can be disinfected. It is Important to have one for each cat in an emergency situation or to transport.

- **Litter box, scoop, litter** (one regular or jumbo-size litter box for each cat in the home, plus one): Litter boxes come in a myriad of shapes and sizes. They should always be accessible, placed in a safe, quiet place, out of the way of dogs, little kids, and foot traffic. Your cat will thank you if you **scoop the litter box every day**. **A garage** is usually **not** a safe place for litter box, especially if used for parking cars or storing toxics. Clumping/scooping litter may be dangerous for young kittens as they may ingest it. Dr. Elsey's Precious Cat is good and economical choice. For cats with heavy urination and cats or people with respiratory issues, we recommend *World's Best cat litter*. Remember the rule of thumb for total number of litter boxes: 1 per cat, + 1.



- **Good cat food!** To keep your cat healthy, feed premium canned/wet and dry food with no additives, artificial coloring, gluten or by-products. Brands like Orijen, Acana, Canidae, Blue Wilderness, Natural Balance, Now, Go, Instinct, Wellness/Core, Solid Gold, BFF, Merrick contain a high-quality and balanced ingredients that are often missing in generic pet foods. Wet food provides needed moisture to promote overall health. Recipes for wholesome home-made foods are available — see Helpful Publications, p.8, Appendix.

Growing kittens and nursing or pregnant cats should eat growth/kitten diet. Please see www.drjeffnichol.com for more information about the importance of the quality of your cat's food.

- **Food bowls:** Each cat should have two separate bowls, one for dry and one for canned food, preferably made of **stoneware, glass or ceramic** (plastics harbor odors and germs; stainless steel can irritate some cats' skin, causing mouth/skin problems). Use flat or shallow food dishes to keep whiskers and chin clean. To prevent bacterial build-up, remove and store leftover wet/canned food in refrigerator and clean all bowls thoroughly after each use. Dry food served alone can be safely left at room temperature.

- **Sleeping basket, tee-pee, or box with bedding** such as old blankets, nightgowns, T-shirts, placed in a quiet, warm place with easy access to the cat's litter box and scratching post. Cats often prefer an elevated sleeping place.



- **Water bowls:** Cats should have constant access to two or more large bowls of clean water that will not tip over. (Porcelain, stoneware, stainless steel, glass. Avoid plastic.) The bowls should be wiped and cleaned daily. Use filtered or bottled water if the quality of your tap water is poor. Cats love fresh, flowing water, so pet water fountains may encourage them to drink. Avoid plastic fountains. (Clean regularly, according to directions.)

Proper hydration is especially important if the cat has an illness such as diabetes, thyroid imbalance, or kidney disease,

- **Scratching post** should be sturdy and taller than an adult cat, with a solid, heavy base so that it will not tip over with rough use. (If it falls over, the cat may avoid using it.) Playing with your cat on/around post with string, flyers, or other toys will give positive reinforcement. **Catnip** adds a special enticement. It is more fragrant if you crush it with your fingers before sprinkling it on the cat tree. If you teach them that this is their furniture, it will encourage them to use it rather than yours. Keep dried catnip in the refrigerator or freezer for freshness.



Twyla perches on her tall cat tree.

Chapter 2 - Your Cat's Longterm Needs

- Find a **reputable local veterinarian** providing full services, for optimal care for your cat. It's important that your cat visit the veterinarian every year or so for a check-up, regardless of whether or not he or she appears to be ill or needs vaccinations or other services. The vet will check his vital signs, his teeth, eyes, ears and palpate organs, etc., and will let you know how your cat is doing. How do you find a good one? Ask your friends and neighbors who have pets which vets they prefer and why.
- **A sturdy pot of cat grass.** For good health, pure fun, and to discourage their eating houseplants. You can use organic, if you want. Please see "How to Plant Grass for Your Cat" below, in Appendix, page 8.
- Dried or Fresh **Catnip.** "Yeowww" Organic loose Catnip is an excellent brand (available at Long Leash on Life)! Dried catnip may be more potent than fresh. Refrigerate or freeze it for freshness.
- **Safe toys** to stimulate exercise, vital for good health. Examples: wand-with-string and feathers (*Cats Claws Feline Flyer*), non-shreddable cloth ribbons, Ping-Pong balls, etc. Toys with feathers, cord or string should be put out of sight when you're away, as the cat may swallow it. Avoid toys that are very small or shreddable fabrics like yarn, rubber bands or tinfoil, pieces of which might be dangerous to ingest either accidentally or on purpose.
- **Exercise!** Your cat will stay healthier and happier with regular exercise and play. Scratching posts are great playthings for your cat, for fun, exercise and even stress relief. Remember when you play with your cat to *use toys for playing with your cats, and your hands only to pet, stroke and carry them.*
- **Brush and/or comb** – All cats benefit from regular brushing to collect loose fur and discourage fur balls and matting. For tips on preventing the formation of fur balls and mats, see "The Natural Cat."
- **Cat collar with I.D. tags and license.** Collar must be expandable/break-away to avoid strangulation if snagged. Some collars may harbor food, so they should be removed before eating.

Chapter 3 - Keeping Your New Cat Safe

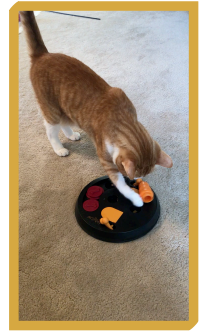
- **Running away from home:** It is important to keep your new cat inside the house, carefully closing windows and doors. Even kittens will sometimes wander off, and most adult cats will attempt to return to their former home. We recommend that you restrict your new cat to one room in the very beginning, furnished with all his needs, as it makes the transition to his new environment easier for him.
- **Identification:** if your cat wears a cat-safe collar, he can be easily identified if lost. Most cats easily tolerate a collar made of suede or other lightweight fabric. The collar should be flexible or break-away to avoid accidental strangulation.

Note: Albuquerque Animal Ordinance prohibits pet cats from roaming and requires that they be microchipped, licensed and vaccinated against rabies. A cat wandering onto someone else's property can be picked up as a stray.

- **Microchipping** your cat is required by the Albuquerque H.E.A.R.T. ordinance and may save his life if he is lost. Collars are helpful but sometimes slip off, and then your cat can only be identified by his chip. **Please remember to register your cat's microchip and update it if you move, so that it can be traced back to you.**
- **When traveling,** please be sure your cat is in the carrier before you open your car or hotel door. Cats are masters of the "mad dash!" Carrier can be equipped with a small litter box, food and water dishes, and a comfortable bed.
- **Moving:** Even cats allowed outdoors must remain strictly indoors after a move until they adjust fully to their new environment. This adjustment period can vary from a week to several months.
- **Diet:**
- Cats and kittens may need time to adjust to a new home and change of diet. They may experience diarrhea at first, especially with a change of diet.
- (1) Introduce new foods gradually if possible to avoid digestive upsets.
- (2) Feed high-quality canned and dry food and/or a homemade diet approved by a veterinarian to keep your cat healthy. (See p. 2, The Basics - Good cat food)
- (3) We recommend a variety of brands and foods for optimum health (fowl/lamb/fish/beef, etc.). Feed seafood sparingly as it often contains contaminants.
- (4) Cats enjoy broth. Mixing 1 tsp. of unsalted broth or water into his meal, or giving him a bit of Gerber's 2nd foods or unsalted tuna broth may encourage the appetite.
- USE CAUTION:
 - (1) Many cats cannot tolerate *milk products* (can cause diarrhea or vomiting) even if they enjoy them.
 - (2) *Onions and perhaps garlic* may be dangerous for cats.
 - (3) *Meat, fish or fowl fed exclusively*, or too much of one kind of food, can cause nutritional imbalances, eventually causing obesity and/or illness. Cats benefit by a variety of foods, although they require high quality protein (cats are obligate carnivores).
 - (4) *Fasting* can be dangerous for cats, especially if they are overweight. Consult a veterinarian if your pet is not eating well.
- If possible, **remove food between meals;** most adult cats do not require constant access to food. It is natural for cats to fast between meals to allow their digestive system to rest. Constant access to food will encourage some cats to overeat and may cause problems with digestion, coat, or general health (Ref. "The Natural Cat,"

Primary Feeding Rule: Remove food between meals). We recommend feeding adult cats 2 to 3 times a day, refrigerating leftover wet food, limiting the amount of dry food rather than free-feeding, and keeping cats at a healthy weight. Kittens can be free fed, as they are growing and have extra nutritional needs. (See www.peteducation.com - "Healthy Pet Weight Calculator"). Indoor cats need healthy activities to prevent boredom-induced overeating.

Decker enjoys games and activity-board fun!



- **Poisonous or toxic household items:**
 - **Antifreeze** (unless is a pet-safe variety of coolant) is lethal to pets.
 - Give **Aspirin and other analgesics** only upon doctor's recommendation.
 - **Acetaminophen (Tylenol)** can be deadly to cats.
 - Fumes from **naphthalene in mothballs and pesticide sprays** are toxic and should be used in the home only for a short time and only if strictly necessary.
 - Use **flea products and flea collars** with caution. They are toxic.
 - Some **houseplants** are toxic if ingested (Please see ASPCA's list of toxic plants.)

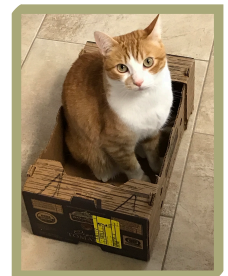
Use care with **household cleaning agents** as cats ingest what is on their paws when they self groom. Choose products that are certified pet- and child-safe. Phenol is toxic to cats. Do not allow your cat to walk on a newly cleaned floor until it is dry.

If you think your pet has been poisoned: Call your local veterinarian, emergency veterinary clinic, or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at (888) 426-4435 immediately. (There is a consultation fee for this service.)

Health Checklist: If you observe any of the following symptoms, please consult with your veterinarian. If not, serious, treatable conditions may go undiagnosed. Cats often hide their pain.

- Decreased or increased appetite, thirst, and/or urination
- Gaining or losing weight
- Changes in activity such as difficulty getting up or down after resting, decreased playing, climbing or jumping, and/or lethargy
- Swollen or bleeding gums and/or foul breath
- Increased scratching or head shaking
- Discharge from the eyes or nose
- Eliminating outside the litter box
- Difficulty breathing, raspy wheezing or coughing
- Changes in behavior, increased irritability, or "grumbling" when being picked up or held, increased vocalization/howling, or bumping into furniture/seeming lost or confused
- Hiding or being less sociable
- Frequent or increased vomiting or gagging/hacking
- Changes in coat (texture, fur loss, matted coat, etc.)

- **Good Dental hygiene:** Some vets offer discounts on dental cleanings for cats and dogs in the months of February and March. You can learn to clean/brush your cat's teeth, with a little patience — See ASPCA's "10 Steps to Dental Health," at www.asPCA.org.
- **Cozy places:** Cats seek warm, sunny or snug retreats, so please provide them with safe places to be comfortable. If not, they may find unsafe spots — *open clothes washers/dryers, open coolers that can close on them; balconies; open refrigerator, freezer; closets with dangerous items. For outside cats: car engines* – rap on the vehicle's hood a few times before starting your car.



- **Dangerous materials:** Take care that any kind of **sewing material** (yarn, needles, etc.), **tinfoil or plastic bag, shreddable or edible toys and wands, dental floss, etc.,** are not left at your pet's disposal. A pet can quickly swallow something small or suffocate in the attempt to explore or play in or with a plastic bag. (A large paper bag should not be dangerous, but it's best to supervise with any new item.)

Chapter 4 - Important Things to Know about Cats

- **Inside or Outside?** Cats who stay indoors are exposed to fewer dangers from cars, dogs, coyotes, owls, poisons such as antifreeze, theft, cat fighting and diseases carried by other cats. Did you know that vaccinations are *not* 100% effective; so, even if your cat is immunized, it can still contract some of the serious contagious diseases common to cats such as feline leukemia, feline infectious peritonitis (FIP) or feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV).
- To promote longevity, have your cat spayed/neutered as early as can be safely done, and keep him in the house, always at night and whenever you are unable to closely supervise him. Cats can be leash-trained and their claws can be trimmed. (See resources in **Helpful Publications** below.)
- **Warmth, sunshine, exercise, quiet, coziness and love:** Cats enjoy warmth and calm, so it is best to place their bed in a warm, quiet spot, preferably elevated, and out of the reach of young children or other pets. They benefit both physically and psychologically from daily playtime and one-on-one with their human companions.
- **Windows** allowing access to direct natural sunlight promote good health.
- **Sleep and Rest.** Cats must have a safe, warm place to sleep in the winter. All cats, need long periods of sleep throughout the day.

Chapter 5 - Meeting Other Pets in Your Home

- One advantage to having more than one pet is that they can keep one another company when you're away from home. Introducing cats to one another, or cats to dogs, is often easier when they are young, but many cats can adapt to group living. For a help introducing a new cat to other pets, see "Introducing a new cat/pet" at www.cat-net.stanford.org. Here are some guidelines that may help.
- **Cats: Be sure all cats, new and resident, are healthy, have no contagious diseases, and are tested and found negative for Feline Leukemia + FIV before introducing them.**
It is best to introduce cats gradually over a period of days or weeks, depending upon the ease of adjustment. Be sure to give extra attention to the resident cat(s) during this time. (1) Begin by having someone else bring the new cat into your home in a carrier. (2) After allowing your cat to view the cat in the carrier, release the newcomer into a separate room with all its basic necessities. The resident cat(s) can adjust to the new cat's presence through the door by sounds and odors at first. (3) You can speed this process by exchanging the cats' bedding and/or rooms. (4) Try playing with them gradually closer and closer together, until they're in the same room when they play. (Food, treats, and/or playtime may provide positive reinforcement during the process.) (5) Limit the exposure at first and increase it gradually, with supervision, over a period of days or weeks, until all cats are comfortable with one another. Consult a veterinary or behavioral professional or call NMAF if your need further help.



Nike and his big brother Atticus have become best buddies!

- **Dogs:** If you have a dog or dogs at home, proceed slowly and cautiously with the introductions, **introducing one dog at a time**, keeping the dog comfortably on leash and at a distance from the cat until you are absolutely sure that the cat and dog can safely interact. Allow enough space between them and a retreat for each of them access, so that neither feels cornered or threatened by the other. Give them both praise/treats when they behave well in the other's presence. Both cat and dog(s) must feel and be kept safe at all times or they may never learn to trust one another or, worse, may actually injure one another. You can use a pet gate for the initial introduction, but be aware that the cat can jump over it and will need cautious supervision. Note: Be aware that some dogs will behave well with a cat while in the house but may chase/attack the cat if he/she is outside, or if the dog sees the cat running away. It is important to supervise them until you feel sure that they are 100% comfortable with one another.
- **Beware of dogs who are highly focused on the cat.** sometimes with tail wagging, as this can indicate prey-driven interest.

Chapter 6 - **Problems with Your Cat?**

- ***House-soiling and other unwanted behavior:*** Cats instinctively use a litter box. The boxes must be clean, long and roomy enough for the cats to easily turn around in them, always accessible, with one box per cat, plus one. Place boxes in quiet spots, away from dogs, traffic or disturbances. If the cat soils outside the box, it means there is a problem to resolve — unacceptable litter type; box is too small, dirty, or uncomfortable; or there may be a medical or stress-related problem (e.g., something disturbing in the house or yard; a kidney or urinary tract infection, which warrants a vet visit). **Note: Stress can bring on urinary problems.** For house-soiling, inappropriate use of claws, or other behavioral issues, please ask NMAF for help. (Also see ***Helpful Publications/Websites*** below.) With patience and the information necessary to tackle the problem, you can keep both your cat(s) and your home happy!

APPENDIX

Helpful Publications & Websites

- ***The Natural Cat, newly revised and expanded***, by Anitra Frazier (2008)
- ***Your Cat*** by Elizabeth M. Hodgkins, DVM, Esq.
- ***Starting from Scratch, and Think Like a Cat***, by Pam Johnson-Bennett
- **The Holistic Animal Handbook** by Kate Solisti-Mattelon & Patrice Mattelon
- ***Cat Fancy Magazine***
- ***Catnip***, newsletter, Tuft's Univ. College of Veterinary Medicine (800)829-0926
- ***Cat Watch***, newsletter, Cornell Univ. College of Veterinary Medicine (800) 829-8893
- **Helpful Website for Dietary Information:** www.catinfo.org (Dr. Lisa Pierson).
- **Good Websites for Behavioral & Health Issues:**
www.ASPCA.org; DRJEFFNICHOL.com; the Indoor Cat Initiative on The Ohio State website: www.vet.osu.edu; www.catnet.stanford.org
- **"Why Cats Need Claws,"** article, The Whole Cat Journal by Dr. Gary Loewenthal — See www.NMAF.org -Resources.

How to Plant & Grow Grass for Your Cat

- Fill a small pot (6 inch or larger in diameter) 3/4 full with good potting soil. Pat gently and water soil well.
- Spread a tablespoon or two of wheat/rye/winter wheat seeds across top of soil. Avoid stacking them.
- Cover with 1/4 inch of soil and gently moisten with water, taking care not to disturb seeds too much.
- Place a light plate over pot; set in a warm spot (60 to 75 degrees) where the cat can't disturb it.
- Use spray bottle every day or every other day to keep grass moist but not wet (to avoid mold).
- Remove plate when sprouts are about one inch or more in height.
- Provide a little indirect, but not direct, sunlight for the grass.
- Continue to keep soil moist with spray bottle, but not too wet or will become moldy and may attract gnats.
- Grass should be ready to eat in about 5 to 7 days and can last for over a week.