



THE NEW CAT

IN

YOUR HOME

How to keep your cat safe, healthy and happy

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 - Keeping a Happy Cat

- Things to think about before you adopt a cat or kitten
- The Basics - What to have on hand when you bring your new cat home

Chapter 2 - Your Cat's Longterm Needs

Chapter 3 - Keeping Your New Cat Safe

Chapter 4 - Important Things to Know about Cats

Chapter 5 - Meeting Other Pets in Your Home

Chapter 6 - Problems with Your Cat?

Appendix

- What to Do if Your Pet is Poisoned
- How to Grow Your Own Cat Grass
- "Feline Feelings" - when to seek veterinary care



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, interactive toy available at Petco - On Right, Turbo Scratcher



- **Play** is an important part of an indoor cat's life. It simulates hunting outdoors for him or her. **Please remember to play with a cat or kitten with a toy, and to avoid playing with them with your hands. Hands should be used only for petting, stroking and picking up the cat.** This simple guideline will prevent the cat from learning unwanted prey-type behavior, such as scratching or biting human hands.
- **Cats require a lot of sleep.** Please respect your cats' need for sleep, which can be 85 or more percent of the day. 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

Before taking your new cat home, it's important to have the following basic items on hand.

- **Cat Carrier** should be big enough for an adult cat. Sturdy plastic or metal is durable and can be disinfected. Important to have one for each cat in an emergency situation or to transport.
- **Litter box, scoop, litter (1 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 is dangerous for young kittens as they may ingest it. We think *Dr. Elsey's Precious Cat* is good quality litter for the price. For cats with heavy urination and cats and people with respiratory issues, *World's Best cat litter* is a good choice. Please remember the Rule of thumb for total number of litter boxes: one per cat, plus one.
- **Good cat food!** To keep your cat healthy, we recommend premium canned and dry food with no additives, artificial coloring, gluten or by-products (Blue, Evo, Innova, Natural Balance, Now, Wellness/Core, Solid Gold, BFF, Merrick, etc.), available at pet supply stores. Generic brands lack quality ingredients.

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 of **stoneware, glass or ceramic** (plastics harbor odors and germs; stainless steel can irritate some cats' skin, causing mouth/skin problems). Dry food mixed with wet is often wasted as it will build bacteria by sitting around. To prevent bacterial build-up, remove and store left-over canned food in refrigerator and clean all bowls thoroughly after each use.
- **Sleeping basket, tee-pee, or box with bedding** such as old blankets, night-gowns, T-shirts, to be 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 bowl:** Cats should have constant access to one or more large bowls of clean water that will not tip over. (Porcelain, stoneware, stainless steel, glass, etc.) The bowl should be wiped and cleaned daily. It is advisable to use filtered or bottled water if the quality of your tap water is poor. Cats love fresh, flowing water, so pet water fountains, although somewhat pricey, may encourage them to drink. Water consumption is especially important if the cat has an illness such as 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.) Play ing with your cat on/around post with cat with string or other toy will give positive reinforcement, and **catnip** adds a special enticement (it's even more fragrant if you squash it up with your fingers before applying it to the post). If they learn that this is their furniture, it will encourage them to avoid using yours!



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 what vets they prefer and why.
- **A sturdy pot of cat grass** (You can grow your own.) 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 11.



- Dried or Fresh **Catnip**. “Yeowww” Organic loose Catnip is a very good brand! Dried catnip appears to be more potent than fresh.
- **Safe toys** to stimulate exercise, vital for 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** – Medium-longhaired to longhaired cats need regular brushing to collect loose fur and discourage matting. For tips on preventing the formation of 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 may 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, as it makes the transition to his new environment easier.
- **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 cats from roaming off their premises 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 so that it can be traced back to you.
- **When traveling**, please be sure your cat is in his or her carrier before you open your car or hotel door. Cats are masters of the "mad dash!"
- **Moving**: Cats should remain strictly indoors after a move for a period of time that will allow them to adjust fully to their new environment. This adjustment period can vary from a week to several months, depending on the cat and the new environment.



- **Diet**: New cats/kittens may need time to adjust to a new home and diet. They may experience diarrhea at first, especially if they have a change of diet.
- DO: (1) Do not 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 your veterinarian to keep your cat healthy. (3) We recommend a variety of brands and foods (fowl/lamb/fish/beef, etc.). (4) Many cats love broth, so mixing plain broth, water (even the juice from canned tuna once in a while) with their meal may encourage them to eat.
- 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) Pure meat, fish or fowl fed exclusively can cause nutritional imbalances, eventually causing obesity and/or illness. Cats need a variety of foods, although their overall diet must include animal protein (cats are "obligate carnivores"). Feeding too much of one kind of food, especially fish, can cause nutritional imbalances and illness. (4) Fasting can be dangerous for cats; consult a veterinarian if your pet is not eating well.



- If possible, **remove food between meals**; most cats do not require constant access to food. It's natural for a cat to fast between meals, giving their digestive system a 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," - The Primary Feeding Rule: Remove Food Between Meals). We recommend feeding adult cats two or three times a day, replacing leftover wet food in fridge, and limiting the amount of dry food rather than free feeding. (Ideal Body Score 5 from www.peteducation.com - "How do I determine if my cat is overweight?")

- **Poisonous or toxic household items:**

Antifreeze (unless is a pet-safe variety of coolant) is lethal to pets.

Give **Aspirin** 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 if strictly necessary.

Use **flea products and flea collars** with caution. They are toxic.

Some **houseplants** are toxic if ingested (Please see ASPCA's hand-out on toxic plants in adoption folder.)



Use care with **household cleaning agents** (e.g., *phenol* is toxic to cats) as cats ingest what is on their paws when they self groom. Choose products that are certified pet- and child-safe.

If your pet has been poisoned: Call your local veterinarian, emergency veterinary clinic, or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at (888) 426-4435. (There is a \$65 consultation fee for this service.) **(See Appendix below for details.)**

- **Health problems:** Warning signs of illness include changes in appetite, quality of coat (matting, fur loss, dull coat, etc.), frequent/increased drinking; inappropriate, too little, or excessive urination; bloody stool, diarrhea; weight loss; frequent vomiting or swallowing; prolonged nasal/eye discharge, sneezing, coughing; listlessness, withdrawal, unusual vocalizing or other physical or behavioral changes. All these may be symptoms of underlying health problem and may warrant a visit to the veterinarian. (See “The Natural Cat” - When to seek help of veterinarian.)
- Note on *dental hygiene*: Some vets offer discounts on dental cleanings on cats and dogs in the month of February. You can learn to clean your cat’s teeth, with a little patience! — See ASPCA’s “10 Steps to Dental Health,” at www.asPCA.org.



- **Dangerous “cozy” places:** Cats seek warm, sunny or snug spots, so please provide them with safe places to be comfortable. If not, they may find their own spot that might be unsafe — **open clothes dryers or coolers that may inadvertently close on them, balconies, open refrigerator or freezer, closets with toxic or dangerous items, car engines** (for warmth in winter – rap on the vehicle’s hood a few times before starting your car) or other unsafe hiding places. This kitty-in-the-pot seems to have found a safe — if not too comfortable — place to lounge!



- **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 ingest 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.)

Chapter 4 - Important Things to Know about Cats

You can clip your cat's claws to keep them blunted, kinder to fabric and skin. (See Helpful Publications below).

- **Inside or Outside?** Cats who spend most or all of their time inside are exposed to fewer dangers such as cars, dogs, coyotes, owls, poisons such as antifreeze, theft, cat fighting and diseases carried by other cats. In addition, 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 or her in the house for most or all the time, always at night, and whenever you are away from home or are unable to monitor him or her. Cats can be leash-trained and their claws can be clipped (See **Helpful Publications** below.)



- **Warmth, sunshine, exercise, quiet, coziness and love:** Cats enjoy warmth and calm, so it's best to place their bed in a warm, quiet spot, preferably elevated, and out of the reach of young children or other pets. They also benefit greatly from playtime and one-on-one with their humans on a regular basis for enhanced physical and psychological well-being.
- Windows allowing access to direct natural sunlight promote good health. Cats must have a safe, warm place to sleep in the winter. Cats and especially kittens require 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 and have not yet developed territorial behavior. For a helpful website for introducing a new cat to other pets, see "Introducing a new cat/pet" at www.catnet.stanford.org. Following are some guidelines that may help.
- **Cats:** *If you have other cats, be sure all cats, new and resident, are healthy and test negative for Feline Leukemia and FIV.*
- Since are often territorial, it's best to introduce them gradually over a period of days or weeks, depending upon the ease of adjustment. Be sure to give lots of extra attention to the resident cat(s) during this time. Begin by having someone else bring the new cat into your home in a carrier. After allowing your cat to view the cat in its carrier, place the newcomer in a separate room with all its basic necessities.

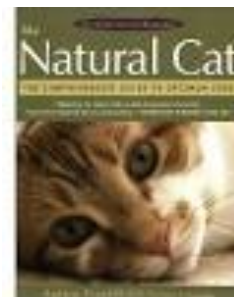
- The resident cat(s) can adjust to the new cat's presence through the door by sounds and odors at first. You can speed this process by exchanging the cats' bedding and/or rooms, then by playing with them gradually closer and closer together, until they're in the same room when they play. (Food, treats, and/or playtime may provide positive reinforcement during the process.) Limit the exposure at first and increase it gradually, day by day.
- ***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 on leash and at a distance from the cat until you are absolutely sure that the cat and dog can safely intermingle or coexist. Allow enough space between them and a place for each of them to retreat to, so that neither feels 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. 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. Keep the dog on leash while outside with the cat in order to test this situation, if applicable.
- Beware of dogs who appear to be highly focused on the cat, sometimes with tail wagging, as this can indicate prey-driven behavior.

Chapter 6 - Problems with Your Cat?

- ***House-soiling and other unwanted behavior:*** Cats instinctively use a litter box, but the box must be large, clean, accessible and comfortable. It should be placed in a quiet place, away from dogs or other disturbing influences. If the cat soils outside the box, then you know that there is a problem – type of litter, litter box placement or size, or of a medical or stress-related nature (e.g., something new in the household that the cat finds disturbing, or a kidney or urinary tract infection, etc., any of which may warrant a vet visit). For house-soiling, inappropriate scratching, or other behavioral problems, please call NMAF for a list of helpful resources. (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.

Helpful Publications & Websites

- ***Your Cat*** by Elizabeth M. Hodgkins, DVM, Esq.
- ***Starting from Scratch, and Think Like a Cat***, by Pam Johnson-Bennett
- ***The Natural Cat, newly revised and expanded***, by Anitra Frazier (2008)
- ***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:** ASPCA.org, drjeffnichol.com, or the Indoor Cat Initiative on The Ohio State website: www.vet.osu.edu
- **"Why Cats Need Claws,"** article, The Whole Cat Journal by Dr. Gary Loewenthal — See NMAF.org - Resources.



APPENDIX

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR PET IS POISONED



Don't panic. Rapid response is important, but panicking can interfere with the process of helping your pet.

Take 30 to 60 seconds to safely collect and have at hand any material involved. This may be of great benefit to your vet and/or APCC toxicologists, as they determine what poison or poisons are involved. In the event that you need to take your pet to a local veterinarian, be sure to take the product's container with you. Also, collect in a sealable plastic bag any material your pet may have vomited or chewed.

If you witness your pet consuming material that you suspect might be toxic, do not hesitate to seek emergency assistance, even if you do not notice any adverse effects. Sometimes, even if poisoned, an animal may appear normal for several hours or for days after the incident.

Call the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center. The telephone number is **(888) 426-4435**. There is a \$65 consultation fee for this service.

Be ready with the following information:

- The species, breed, age, sex, weight and number of animals involved.
- The animal's symptoms.
- Information regarding the exposure, including the agent (if known), the amount of the agent involved and the time elapsed since the time of exposure.
- Have the product container/packaging available for reference.

Please note: If your animal is having seizures, losing consciousness, is unconscious or is having difficulty breathing, telephone ahead and bring your pet immediately to your local veterinarian or emergency veterinary clinic. If necessary, he or she may call the APCC.

Be Prepared

Keep the telephone number of the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center—**(888) 426-4435**—as well as that of your local veterinarian, in a prominent location.

Invest in an emergency first-aid kit for your pet. The kit should contain:

- A fresh bottle of hydrogen peroxide, 3 percent USP (to induce vomiting)
- A turkey baster, bulb syringe or large medicine syringe (to administer peroxide)
- Saline eye solution
- Artificial tear gel (to lubricate eyes after flushing)
- Mild grease-cutting dishwashing liquid (for bathing an animal after skin contamination)
- Forceps (to remove stingers)
- A muzzle (to protect against fear- or excitement-induced biting)
- A can of your pet's favorite wet food
- A pet carrier

Always consult a veterinarian or the APCC for directions on how and when to use any emergency first-aid.

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.
- 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.

Feline Feelings — What is your cat trying to tell you?

This checklist is a useful tool to help you detect symptoms of various ailments, and to know when it is important to get in touch with your veterinarian. Many serious health concerns can remain undiagnosed and untreated due to cats' natural instinct to hide pain and illness.

- 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
- Hiding or being less sociable
- Frequent or increased vomiting or gagging/hacking
- Changes in coat (texture, fur loss, matted coat)