Behavior is a constantly evolving true science just like internal medicine, oncology and human psychology. To change a pet's behavior requires a dedicated owner and a patient professional team. The team may consist of your veterinarian, a trainer, a behaviorist, etc.

It is important to realize that though anyone may call themselves a "trainer", a "dog/cat whisperer", a "dog/cat psychologist" there are actually very few truly qualified and up-to-date experts. Even recently graduated DVMs have been known to institute the "puppy roll" in an attempt to show the fearful pup dominance. This is no longer recommended by true behaviorists and can have dangerous and unintended consequences. Though entertaining, some of Cesar Milan's techniques are outdated and can set some patients back in their therapy.

Within any profession, there are individuals that have varying level of interest and competency. Although a veterinarian may be a fantastic dermatologist, they may be a terrible trainer. Alternatively, a trainer may be great with your dog but they may not be so good with cats.

In today's society, we have repeated requests for places that clients can send their pet to be trained. The metroplex has an abundance of these places that range from terrible to acceptable. Notice, NONE are terrific. Training pets is 99% training pet parents! This is not the best way to approach most pets training or behavior issues. The best way is a SMALL class with a certified trainer that you communicate well with people and pets. The same techniques are not effective with all people or pets and you may have to try several before you find the correct match.

With significant behavior issues such as aggression, society and liability issues may require the professional to inform you in writing that your pet is dangerous or label the patient's medical report to inform staff. As pet lovers/parents these alerts and notices can be very difficult to hear/read and acknowledge. Please be assured that these actions are taken out of necessity to keep people safe, pet parents from being mis-informed and pets from being un-necessarily quarantined.

A local board eligible veterinary behaviorist is Amanda Florsheim, DVM 214-663-4022

Behavior Resources

[www.apdt.com](http://www.apdt.com) - association of pet dog trainers - has other references, CDs and can search for trainers by zip code

The best TV show - "It's Me or The Dog" - Victoria Stilwell - she also has a book and a website [http://positively.com](http://positively.com)

[http://abortonline.org/videos.php](http://abortonline.org/videos.php) - an excellent source of videos and articles on many common issues

[http://www.askdryin.com](http://www.askdryin.com) - a DVM author who champions the low stress handling we encourage

[http://texasvetbehavior.com](http://texasvetbehavior.com) - the only FT Texas veterinary behaviorist, located in the Houston area, accepts referrals

"Don't Shoot the Dog!: The New Art of Teaching and Training" by Karen Pryor
"The Power of Positive Training" by Pat Miller
"The Other End of the Leash" by Pat McConnell
"Mine! A Practical Guide to Resource Guarding" by Jean Donaldson
"Fight! A Guide to Dog-Dog Aggression" by Jean Donaldson
"The Culture Clash" by Jean Donaldson
"Feeling Outnumbered? How to Manage and Enjoy Your Multi-Dog Household" by Karen B London and Patricia McConnell
"Control Unleashed - Creating a Focused and Confident Dog" by Leslie McDevitt
"Click to Calm Healing the Aggressive Dog" by Emma Parsons
"Fiesty Fido" by Patricia McConnell and Karen London
"Living with Kids and Dogs ....Without Losing Your Mind" by Colleen Pesar
"How to Behave So Your Dog Behaves" by Sophia Yin
"Animals Make us Human: Creating the Best Life for Animals" by Temple Grandin
"Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior" by Temple Grandin
"Way to Go! How to Housetrain a Dog of Any Age" by Karen London
"Parenting Your Dog" by Trish King
"Canine Body Language: A Photographic Guide to Interpreting the Native Language of the Domestic Dog" by Brenda Aloff

For Cats:

"Getting Started: Clicker Training for Cats" by Karen Pryor
"Here Kitty, Kitty" by Catherine Crawmer
101 Things You Didn’t Know
Could Harm Your Pet

Make your home a safer place for your pets by keeping them away from the following hazardous household items, plants, foods, objects and trouble areas

**Household Items**

1. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (ibuprofen, aspirin, etc.)
2. Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
3. Cold and flu medications
4. Antidepressants
5. Vitamins
6. Home insect products
7. Rat and mouse bait
8. Bleach
9. Diet pills
10. Disinfectants
11. Fabric softener
12. Lead
13. Lighter fluid
14. Mothballs
15. Anti-cancer drugs
16. Solvents (paint thinners, etc.)
17. Flea and tick products
18. Drain cleaners
19. Liquid potpourri
20. Slug and snail bait
21. Oven cleaner sprays
22. Lime/scale remover
23. Fly bait
24. Detergents
25. Tobacco products

**Harmful Foods**

You should never let your dogs or cats eat any of these foods. Be sure to store them where your pets can’t find them.

26. Avocados
27. Chocolate (all forms)
28. Coffee (all forms)
29. Onions & onion powder
30. Garlic
31. Grapes
32. Raisins
33. Macadamia nuts
34. Alcoholic beverages
35. Moldy/spoiled foods
36. Salt
37. Fatty foods
38. Gum, candies, or other foods sweetened with xylitol
39. Tea leaves
40. Raw yeast dough

**Objects**

These household objects can cause puncture wounds, choking, or internal organ damage to your pets. Make sure they aren’t left lying around.

41. Balls (specifically balls that are small or have a smooth outer coating
42. Batteries
43. Bread twist ties
44. Buttons
45. Coins
46. Cotton swabs
47. Glass
48. Hair pins
49. Jewelry
50. Nylons
51. Paper clips
52. Plastic wrap
53. Socks
54. Rubber-bands
55. Sharp objects (knives, razors, scissors, nails, needles, etc.)
56. String, yarn, or dental floss
57. Towels
58. Wax
Plants

Do you have any of these plants in or around your home? If so, make sure they are in places where your pets can’t reach them, or consider getting rid of them altogether.

59. Common Plants

Aloe
Amaryllis
Andromeda Japonica
Asian Lily
Asparagus Fern
Australian Nut
Autumn Crocus
Azalea
Belladonna
Bird of Paradise
Bittersweet (American & European)
Black Locust
Branching Ivy
Buckeye
Buddhist Pine
Calamdium
Calla Lily
Castor Bean
Ceriman
Clematis
Cordatum
Corn Plant
Cycads
Cyclamen
Daffodil
Daylily
Devil’s Ivy
Dieffenbachia
Dumbcane

Easter Lily
Elephant Ears
Emerald Fern
English Ivy
Eucalyptus
Ferns
Fiddle-leaf Philodendron
Gold Dust Dracaena
Florida Beauty
Foxglove
Glacier Ivy
Gladiolas
Golden Pothos
Heavenly Bamboo
Honeysuckle
Hurricane Plant
Hyacinth
Hydrangea
Iris
Jerusalem Cherry
Jimson Weed
Kalanchoe
Lantana
Lilies (all Lilium species)
Lily of the Valley
Lupine
Marble Queen
Morning Glory
Mother-in-Law

Mountain Laurel
Narcissus
Needlepoint Ivy
Nepthysis
Nightshade
Oleander
Panda
Peace Lily
Philodendron
Poison hemlock
Precatory Bean (rosary pea)
Privet
Red Emerald
Rhododendron
Ribbon Plant
Sago Palm
Satin Pathos
Schefflera
Striped Dracaena
Sweetheart Ivy
Tulip
Water Hemlock
Wisteria
Yew
Yucca

Trouble Areas

Dogs and cats are more likely to be injured in these areas of your home. Keep your pets away from these places or watch them closely when they’re near them if you can.

60. Balconies – Tall balconies without safety railings, or railings spaced too far apart, can lead to a dangerous fall.

61. Bath tubs or sinks – Small pets can drown in full bathtubs or sinks.

62. Doors and windows – Dogs and cats can run away if they find an open door or window. They can also get seriously injured if they run across a busy road. Windows should have screens to prevent cats or other pets from falling out.

63. Electrical cords – Your pets can be electrocuted if they bite or chew on electrical cords that are plugged in.

64. Fireplace – Your pets can be burned by the flames or get sick if they eat the ashes.

65. Toilets – Toilet water is not healthy for pets to drink; always remember to close the lid. Make sure you leave plenty of clean, fresh water for your pets if you must leave them home alone.

66. Washer and Dryer – Your pets can crawl into a washer or dryer without your knowledge; close the doors to these appliances when you’re not using them.
Outside the Home

Make sure your pets are safe as they enjoy the outdoors by keeping them away from these potential dangers.

67. Algae* – can be found in ponds or other bodies of water; certain forms can be toxic.
68. Antifreeze/Coolant* – some types of antifreeze or coolant products contain ethylene glycol, which is highly toxic to dogs and cats, even in small amounts.
69. Fire pit/Grill – Flames can result in serious burns and ashes can cause illness if ingested.

70. Fences or gates – Your pets can run away if they find openings in damaged fences or gates. They can also get hurt or strangled if they get stuck.
71. Deck lattice – Your dogs or cats can get stuck in the openings under your deck and possibly be strangled.
72. De-icing salts – Some formulations may contain chemicals that are hazardous to pets if ingested in large amounts. Look for “pet-friendly” de-icing salts.
73. Compost (particularly if moldy)
74. Gasoline*
75. Oil*
76. Pesticides*
77. Cocoa bean shell mulch fertilizer*
78. Swimming pools and hot tubs – Never leave your pet unattended near uncovered pools, even if they can swim.

*All contain chemicals that may cause serious illness depending on the circumstances of exposure.

Holiday Hazards

Help your pets enjoy the holidays safely by keeping them away from potential problems on these special days.

79. Alcohol – alcoholic beverages are toxic to pets and should NEVER be given to them during the holidays or at any other time.

Valentine’s Day

80. Flowers and Candy – Many types of flowers and plants found in bouquets are harmful to dogs and cats if they are ingested (see our list of hazardous plants).

Easter

81. Fake grass – This colorful “grass” may look appetizing to your pets, but it could cause them to choke or obstruct their intestines if ingested.
82. Small toys and other plastic items – If swallowed, small toys and plastic Easter eggs can cause your pet to choke or even damage their intestinal tracts.

4th of July

83. Fireworks – Fireworks can scare your pets making them run off, or cause serious injuries if detonated near them. Many formulations are also toxic if ingested.
Halloween

84. Repeatedly opening doors to greet trick-or-treaters can increase the chances of your pets running out. Keep an eye on their whereabouts at all times. If feasible, keep cats in a secure area or closed room when opening doors.
85. Candles – Pets are naturally curious, and may be attracted to the bright lights of the flame in dark areas. Dogs and cats could either burn themselves by the flame or knock the candle over, starting a fire.
86. Xylitol – Candy or gum sweetened with xylitol is toxic and should be kept away from your pet.
87. All forms of chocolate can be harmful to your pet, potentially resulting in poisoning or even pancreatic inflammation from the high fat content.

Thanksgiving

88. Bones – Turkey, chicken, and other small animal bones are very different from the large bones you find at the pet store. These small bones splinter easily and can cause serious internal damage if swallowed, so NEVER give them to your pet.
89. Hot containers – Your dog or cat will most likely become curious when they smell something cooking. Keep an eye on hot containers so that your pet does not tip them over and get burned.

Christmas

90. Holiday plants – Christmas Rose, Holly, Lilies and Mistletoe are all toxic to dogs and cats.
91. Ribbons – It may look adorable, but placing a ribbon around your pet’s neck may cause them to choke.
92. Bubbling lights – Older forms of this attractive decoration may contain methylene chloride, which is a highly toxic chemical.
93. Fire salts – Contain chemicals that could be harmful to pets.
94. Angel hair (spun glass) – Can be irritating to the eyes and skin, and could cause intestinal obstruction if eaten in large amounts.
95. Christmas tree water – Stagnant tree water or water containing preservatives could result in stomach upset if ingested.
96. Decoration hooks – Can cause blockage and/or trauma to gastrointestinal tract if swallowed.
97. Styrofoam – Can cause your pets to choke if swallowed.
98. Ornaments – These can look like toys to cats and dogs, but they can cause serious injury, especially if your pets break or swallow them.
99. Tinsel – Can cause choking or internal trauma if swallowed.

New Year’s Eve

100. Balloons and Confetti – These fun New Year’s party decorations can cause your pets to choke or obstruct their intestines if ingested. Keep an eye on your pets when they’re around these items or move them to an area that is not decorated.
101. Loud noises – New Year’s is typically a noisy holiday. Unfortunately, loud noises frighten pets and can cause them to run off. Keep your pets in a separate room, away from noisemakers, music, and other loud sounds that may startle them.
Synthetic facial pheromone sprays/diffusers
Continued scratching by cats may be related to stress, anxiety, attention seeking, or a perceived lack of security in their environment. Anxiety can also be intensified by punishment, thus driving the cat to increase scratching behaviors in the same or other undesirable locations in the home. Consider using synthetic facial pheromone sprays and/or diffusers to help relieve anxiety or stress. Apply a synthetic pheromone spray such as Feliway® on the objects or areas in your home where your cat has exhibited undesired scratching. Do so after cleaning with soap and water to remove the communication marking scents left by your cat’s paws. Applying daily comforting pheromones can prevent your cat’s need to mark these areas again. Feliway® should not be sprayed on the desired scratcher. If undesirable scratching occurs in several rooms, indicating a more generalized anxiety or stress, it is recommended to also plug-in a synthetic pheromone diffuser such as Feliway® to comfort your cat in their home environment.

Appropriate environmental enrichment
Providing your cat with an environment that is enriching is vital to teaching your cat to scratch on appropriate objects. Destructive scratching can occur in cats because their needs have not been fully met. Cats need the proper resources to perform their natural behaviors and have control over their social interactions. You can enhance your cat’s health and well-being by ensuring all their needs are met in the home. The AAFP has a wealth of information for cat owners on environmental enrichment. Visit: www.catvets.com/environmental-needs.

You are an important member of your cat’s healthcare team.
You are instrumental in helping with the success of treatments and improved healthcare for your cat.

For more information on declawing, declawing alternatives, and claw trimming, visit: www.catvets.com/declawalternatives

We wish to thank Ceva Animal Health for sponsoring this document.
WHAT IS DECLAWING?
Feline declawing is an elective and ethically controversial procedure, which is NOT medically necessary for cats in most instances. Declawing entails the amputation of a cat’s third phalanx (P3), or third ‘toe bone.’ Unlike human nails, cats’ claws are attached to the last bone in their toes. A comparison in human terms would be cutting off a person’s finger at the last joint of each finger.

It is important to understand that scratching is normal behavior for cats, which has an inherent function. The primary reason cats scratch is to maintain the necessary claw motion used in hunting and climbing, as well as a means to stretch their body. Scratching serves to groom the front claws and leave markers of the cat’s presence. A cat’s claws grow in layers and scratching removes the worn outer layer to expose the new growth inside. Cat owners must therefore provide alternatives for cats such as suitable scratchers.

ALTERNATIVES TO DECLAWING

Scratching posts/pads
Provide your cat with suitable ‘scratchers’ where they can exhibit normal scratching behavior. Scratchers come in multiple styles and textures. It is important to experiment with a variety of textures and types of scratchers to determine which your cat prefers. Some examples include scratching posts or pads with sisal rope or rough fabric, cardboard boxes, and lumber or logs. Scratchers can be vertical or horizontal and there are even varieties that blend into your home decor.

The placement of scratchers is very important. Cats often stretch or scratch when they wake up so consider placing one near where your cat sleeps. It may also be effective to place a scratcher near or in front of a cat’s preferred, yet undesirable, scratching object (e.g. corner of the couch). Kittens and cats can be trained to use scratchers by rewarding use of the scratcher with the cat’s favorite treat. If the cat scratches elsewhere, they should be gently picked up, taken to the scratcher, and then rewarded. Cats should always be positively reinforced and never punished.

Regular claw trimming
Regularly trimming your cat’s claws can prevent injury and damage to household items. Proper feline nail trimmers should be used to prevent splintering of the claws. The frequency of claw trimming will depend on your cat’s lifestyle. Indoor cats, kittens, and older cats will need more regular nail trims, whereas outdoor cats may naturally wear down their nails requiring less frequent trimming. If possible, start trimming as kittens so they become comfortable with the process early on. If your cat does not like claw trimmings start slow, offer breaks, and make it a familiar routine. Ask your veterinarian for advice or a demonstration on trimming your cat’s claws. Always trim claws in a calm environment and provide positive reinforcement. Proper training to scratch on appropriate surfaces, combined with nail care, can prevent damage in the home.

Temporary synthetic nail caps
These caps are glued over your cat’s nails to help prevent human injury and damage to household items. The nail caps usually need to be re-applied every 4-6 weeks; therefore they may be a less desirable alternative to regular nail trimming, suitable scratchers, and environmental enrichment.
FELINE DECLAWING

What is declawing?
Declawing is the surgical removal of the toenail and portion of bone from which it grows. In fact, depending on how the procedure is performed, it might best be referred to as an amputation of the small bone on the end of each toe. As a surgical procedure, it requires a general anesthesia and appropriate and sufficient pain management throughout the recovery procedure. The healing process, to the time that the cat can walk, climb, knead and scratch comfortably, generally takes a few days to a few weeks. Your cat may be hospitalized for several days and pain management medications may be dispensed for a few extra days after sending your cat home. Depending on the procedure, a special kitty litter may be needed for a few days to prevent contamination of the surgery sites until the paws are entirely healed. Anecdotally, adult cats and those that are heavier may take longer to heal and adapt.

Should I get my indoor cat declawed?
Declawing is a surgical procedure on both front feet, which may be painful and affect the cat’s mobility until it is healed; it should not be considered a routine or preventive surgery. Declawing a cat merely because it will be staying indoors or because it might one day cause damage with its claws is difficult, if not impossible, to justify. Since most cats are not spayed or neutered until approximately 6 months of age, at the very least give your cat a chance to learn how to use its claws appropriately by teaching it where to scratch and where to climb. (See our handout on scratching). If you add in some partial confinement or a few strategically placed booby traps, most cats can be prevented from doing damage without the need for surgery. Regular nail trimming and commercially available plastic nail caps can also be useful. Another consideration is that some cats are scratching as a form of marking behavior that might be due to anxiety. In these cases, declawing might stop the scratching and damage but does not address the problem. Finding out what’s wrong and resolving the anxiety might eliminate the scratching.

My cat is causing unacceptable damage. Can I declaw my cat?
Declawing is a drastic but permanent solution to most scratching problems and, as mentioned, may be avoidable with some attention to training and prevention. However, declawing is a quick and effective means of eliminating scratching problems when other options have been exhausted. In some homes, the issue comes down to the options of removing the cat from the
home or having it declawed. In one study it was estimated that as many as 50% of cat owners who declawed their cats would not have otherwise kept their cat. This might be the case where the cat continues to damage the furniture, or where the cat causes injuries to people during play or handling. Even the slightest scratch can have serious consequences when a member of the household suffers from an immunosuppressive disease. It might also be argued that the short term pain and discomfort of declawing (which can be minimized with appropriate attention to pain medications) may be preferable to a life of constant confinement and excessive (and unsuccessful) attempts at punishment. Although it has been estimated that approximately 25% of cats are declawed in North America, declawing is illegal in many countries outside North America.

**What is the effect of declawing on the cat?**

Many authors have written of dire behavioral and surgical complications of declawing, but these reports are based on myths and anecdotes. In the past few years, a number of behaviorists, pet psychologists and epidemiologists have studied the effects of declawing on the cat, the owner, and the cat-owner relationship. At least 10 scientific studies have examined the consequences of declawing on the pet and on the pet-owner relationship. These studies show that declawing does not alter the cat’s behavior. In fact, cats may continue to scratch furniture after declawing, but cause no damage. There is no increase in behavior problems. Declawed cats are not at greater risk of getting bitten or injured in catfights. Owners of declawed cats report a higher number of good behaviors than the owners of clawed cats. There is some speculation about whether declawed cats might be more prone to either biting or housesoiling. In a study of biting frequency and intensity, declawed cats did not bite any more often or any more seriously than a control group of non-declawed cats. As for housesoiling, since cats might find it uncomfortable to use their litter for the first few days after declawing, it is possible that litter avoidance could arise at this time. However, close attention to litter maintenance, the use of non-adherent litters and early attention to any emerging problems are generally successful. Housesoiling problems appear to be equally common in cats that have been declawed and those that have not. Quite surprisingly the only recognized concern is a few days of post-surgical discomfort. Therefore be certain to discuss pain management options with your veterinarian prior to surgery.

When owners of declawed cats are asked to assess the effects of declawing on the cat owner relationship, declawing always met or surpassed their expectations, and over 70% indicated an improvement in their relationship with their cat. Declawing allows people to keep their cat and stop household damage. Normally, only the front claws need to be removed to prevent furniture damage.

**What is a tendonectomy and how does it compare to declawing?**

Another surgery to reduce scratching is a “digital flexor tendonectomy”, in which the tendon on each claw is cut so that it cannot be used for scratching. The surgery resulted in less postoperative pain for the first two days in comparison to declawing. However, after the tendonectomy you will need to regularly trim your cat’s nails, as they will continue to grow and may catch on furniture because they will no longer be conditioned and worn down by scratching. Therefore with special attention to pain management, declawing may be the preferable surgery for owners who cannot properly maintain their cat’s nails.

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This client information sheet is based on material written by Debra Horwitz, DVM, Diplomate ACVB & Gary Landsberg, DVM, Diplomate ACVB

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How to habituate your cat to a carrier

Use this step-by-step guide to help your cat adjust to a cat carrier for her trip to the doctor.

**Step 1: Cat, meet carrier**
Place the carrier in a cat-friendly area and leave it open so your curious kitty can check it out when she’s ready.

**Step 2: Draw kitty close with food**
Start by placing the food bowl near the carrier. If she’s too shy to snack close to the carrier, move it as far away as necessary to get her to eat.

**Quick tip:** Add a special, tasty treat, such as a bite of canned tuna or chicken, to lure your kitty close.

Once your cat regularly eats from the bowl, begin moving the bowl closer and closer each day until she will chow down happily next to the carrier.

**Step 3: Create a dining car**
When your cat comfortably dines next to the carrier regularly, she’s ready to dine in—inside the carrier, that is. Place the food bowl directly inside the carrier entrance so she can pop her head inside for a quick snack.

**Quick tip:** Never close the door on your cat. If you need to, you can prop it open and wire if necessary—just make sure it won’t accidentally fall shut on the cat and startle her.

**Step 4: Customize your kitty’s cave**
Place toys and treats in the carrier occasionally so your curious kitty discovers them there. You might try these fun options, depending on your cat’s personal preferences:

- Stuffed mice
- Catnip toys
- Feather toys
- Cat grass

Spraying a synthetic feline facial pheromone in the carrier occasionally may also help.

**Step 5: Move dinner inside the carrier**
When your kitty comfortably dines with her head inside the carrier for several days, you’re ready to move the food dish further inside the carrier—a few inches every day until she steps completely into the carrier to eat.

**Step 6: Shut the door**
Once kitty’s comfortable in the carrier, you can start to close the carrier door for a few seconds at a time with your cat inside. If your cat ever acts distressed with the door closed, release her immediately. And next time you close the door, only close it for as long as she tolerated the door closed on a previous session. When you can keep the door closed for long periods of time, you’re ready to practice car rides with your cat. Remember, many cats only associate their carrier with a trip to the veterinarian. So your goal is to change your kitty’s associations with the carrier and car rides to fun things and special food treats instead of terror and trauma.

**Quick tip:** Once you find your cat regularly spends time resting, playing and eating in the crate, then on the day you need to take her to the veterinarian, simply close the door and off you go. When you return home, be sure to continue offering food and fun in the crate. As long as more good things happen in the crate than scary things, it should always be easy to take the cat to the veterinarian when necessary.
Cats need regular check-ups to help ensure longer, happier, and healthier lives. During routine check-ups your veterinarian can often detect conditions or diseases that may affect your cat’s health before they become painful or more difficult to treat. The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) established the Cat Friendly Practice® (CFP) Program to reduce the stress associated with veterinary visits, improve the quality of care provided, and support the veterinary team so they consider a cat’s distinct needs and behaviors.

Want to learn more?
Visit www.catvets.com/cfp. The website includes a searchable database of Cat Friendly Practices® near you.

Why you and your cat will love a Cat Friendly Practice®
What to Expect from a Cat Friendly Practice®

CFP’s have a:
- Waiting room/area that reduces stress associated with noise, other pets, or unfamiliar smells (methods can include feline-only area, cat-only appointment times, separate space with a barrier blocking visual contact, etc.).
- Veterinary staff receives ongoing feline education on medical care, behavior, communication, and feline-friendly handling techniques.
- Feline-only or feline-centric examination room—a safe, non-threatening area where cats can be examined calmly and effectively.
- Trained staff who recognize subtle, early signs of sickness, fear, or anxiety, and adapt appropriately.
- Veterinary facility that is well-maintained and equipped for feline patients (cat sized equipment, soft coverings, feline facial pheromone diffuser, etc.)
- Procedure to adjust for each cat based on whatever is least stressful for the cat. Exams may be performed in the carrier, on the floor, or in the veterinarian’s lap.

More Pleasant Vet Visits

Cat Friendly Practices® make specific changes to ensure they understand a cat's unique needs and implement feline-friendly standards. These changes provide a more calming environment for cats. CFP’s can advise you on ways to reduce stress before and after the visit, including how to make the carrier a home away from home for your cat.

Staff are trained in approaching and handling cats in a gentle, empathetic, and caring manner. Some clinics have even made physical adjustments to make the visit more positive for you and your cat.

The CFP certificate on the clinic’s wall is earned. Through a self-assessment, the practice must meet specified criteria to verify the staff, environment, and overall veterinary practice is truly cat friendly.

When you see the CFP designation at a practice, you can be confident your cat will be given exceptional care and attention through all phases of the visit including examinations, procedures, and/or hospitalization.

The Cat Friendly Practice® designation indicates the practice has demonstrated higher levels of commitment and excellence in feline medicine.
4 **TIPS** for bringing your cat to the veterinarian

We know it can be tough to wrangle your cat for a trip to the veterinarian’s office. Many cats dislike the cat carrier as well as riding in the car, so heading in for an annual checkup can sometimes be a stressful proposition. Follow these four tips when you head to your next veterinary appointment to reduce your cat’s stress and make for a calmer car ride.

1. **Make the carrier your cat’s second home.**
   Cat carriers are typically associated with many unpleasant things. Many cat owners keep the carrier in a closet or in the garage, so the cat hasn’t rubbed on it or slept inside it. Cats who haven’t transferred their scent to the carrier, therefore, see it as a foreign object. So give your cat time to mark the carrier with facial rubbing—she’ll feel like it belongs to her, and you may find it easier to place her inside. If you have room, make the carrier a part of your family room furniture. That means leaving it out all the time with the door open. Place a soft towel inside to make it a little more cozy. Pretty soon, your cat won’t think twice about entering the carrier.

2. **Turn the carrier into a meal center.**
   Put part of your cat’s daily food in the carrier to help your cat associate something good with the carrier. Even better: Use a bit of especially yummy food, like canned food or even a little tuna. Or try tossing your cat’s favorite treat in the carrier when she wants to be left alone. This will reward her for seeking solitude in the carrier and continue to reinforce the notion that the carrier isn’t so bad after all.

3. **Try a different kind of carrier.**
   If you have an emergency and don’t have time to let your cat adjust to the carrier, try using a pillowcase as a carrier. With the cat on your lap, slip the pillowcase over her body, head first. Knot the top of the case and support the bottom when holding your cat. Alternately, you can use any type of item your cat likes to nap in—two laundry baskets connected together could also work. These items aren’t a trigger for fear like your standard carrier might be.

4. **Consider using a synthetic product.**
   Using a product that contains a feline facial pheromone can help calm cats during stressful events. These products can be sprayed on blankets, towels, or bandanas before you head to the veterinarian. Many cats become less agitated when their owners use these sprays, so purchasing one could make your life easier when it’s time to take your cat for a car ride.

Regular wellness exams are crucial for keeping your cat happy and healthy. Use these tips the next time you head to your veterinarian to make it much easier on both you and your cat.

Information courtesy of Dr. Sally J. Foote, Okaw Veterinary Clinic, Tuscola, Ill.
What is good healthcare for cats?

Whether an independent soul or your constant companion, your feline friend needs good care to thrive. Here’s a look at what that means—in the veterinary hospital and at home.

At the hospital:

> **ANNUAL WELLNESS EXAMINATIONS.** Cats can often mask how they’re feeling—especially if they’re under the weather. That’s why it’s critical to have your cat examined by a veterinarian every year. Older cats or those with behavioral or medical conditions may need to be seen more frequently.

> **DIAGNOSTIC TESTS.** Even if your cat seems healthy on the outside, an underlying problem may be lurking on the inside. Fecal exams, blood and urine tests, and other tests that screen for infectious diseases, such as feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline leukemia virus (FeLV), may be required, based on your cat’s age and lifestyle.

> **VACCINATIONS.** Even if your cat spends most or all of its time indoors, it may still be at risk for certain preventable viral diseases. Your veterinarian will assess your cat’s risk and develop a vaccine protocol tailored specifically to its needs.

> **PARASITE CONTROL.** Cats are prime targets for parasites such as fleas and ticks, not to mention the ones we can’t see like heartworms and intestinal parasites. Your veterinarian will discuss the best options to keep your cat free and clear of these dangerous pests.

> **DENTAL CARE.** Dental disease isn’t just for dogs—cats are susceptible, too. Your veterinarian will examine your cat’s mouth and determine if further action, like a full oral health assessment and treatment under anesthesia, is needed to keep your cat’s teeth and gums in good shape.

> **BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT.** Just as your cat needs to be physically healthy, it needs to be emotionally healthy, too. Your veterinarian will ask questions about your cat’s environment—whether there are other pets or children in the house and how your cat interacts with them, what kind of playful activities your cat participates in, and so on—and inquire about any behavioral issues that need attention.

> **NUTRITIONAL COUNSELING.** From questions about the type of food you’re feeding and the frequency of meals to assessing your cat’s body condition score, your veterinarian will want as much information as possible to determine if any adjustments need to be made in your cat’s feeding regimen in order to keep it in the most healthy weight range.

At home:

> **NUTRITION.** Your veterinarian can determine the right type and amount of food your cat needs to stay in a healthy weight range, but the environment you provide for meals is important, too. Putting food in a quiet area or offering it in toys like food balls or puzzles can make mealtimes more enjoyable.

> **ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT.** Cats need to be in stimulating and comfortable surroundings, so be sure to provide plenty of toys, hiding spots, scratching posts and elevated resting areas in your home. And don’t forget the importance of one-on-one playtime with you. This will also give you the chance to watch for any changes in behavior.

> **LITTER BOX NEEDS.** Provide at least one litter box per cat—and in a multcat house, throw in one extra box for good measure. In general, cats prefer open litter boxes in a clean, quiet environment and unscented, clumping litter. Cats are also finicky, so it’s best not to switch up the brand and type of litter you use. And be sure to scoop the box at least once a day.

> **GROOMING.** Cats are pretty good at keeping their coats in good condition, but they may need help when it comes to claw care. Your veterinarian can show you how to trim your cat’s nails. Even better, provide scratching posts for a DIY option—and an enrichment activity, too.

> **TRAVEL AND CARRIER ACCEPTANCE.** It’s no secret that most cats dislike carriers, but it doesn’t have to be that way. Condition your cat to feel comfortable in a carrier at a young age, if possible. Leave the carrier out in the house and let your cat wander in and out of it. Also, take your cat on short rides in the car, so it won’t always associate getting in the carrier with a trip to the veterinarian.

Information provided by KELLY ST. DENIS, DVM, DABVP (feline practice), owner of Charing Cross Cat Clinic in Brantford, Ontario; ELIZABETH COLLENS, DVM, DABVP (feline practice), owner of Chico Hospital for Cats in Chico, Calif.; and the AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF FELINE PRACTITIONERS
Cats and heartworm disease: A story you may not have heard

Mosquitoes don’t discriminate. They bite you, they bite your cat. But when they sink their teeth into your feline friend, they might cause more than an itch. Mosquitoes can transmit heartworm larvae to cats. If these microscopic larvae settle in cats’ lungs, they can cause big health problems. There’s no cure for feline heartworm disease, but it is 100 percent preventable. Read below to learn more, then talk with your veterinarian about which prevention method is best for keeping your cat and its ticker heartworm-free.

Do cats really get heartworms?
Heartworms aren’t just a dog problem. A Texas study conducted in the late 1990s found that 26 percent of cats had contracted heartworms at some point in their lives. And remember, those pesky mosquitoes will bite any animal regardless of whether its tail wags or flicks.

Just how do mosquitoes transmit heartworms to cats?
Mosquitoes are carriers of heartworm larvae. When a mosquito bites a cat, the larvae enter the cat’s system through the bite wound. When these larvae develop into adult heartworms, they eventually die and cause severe heart inflammation that can be fatal. Even though the presence of adult heartworms is potentially deadly, the little larvae can be even more problematic. Most larvae don’t make it to adulthood in cats, which means they die in the cat’s lungs. The irritation leads to heartworm-associated respiratory disease (HARD). Studies show that 50 percent of cats infected with heartworm larvae have significant disease in the arteries that supply blood to their lungs. To learn more about HARD, see “Heartworms Can’t Hide,” below.

My cat doesn’t go outside, so I don’t need to worry, right?
Wrong. Indoor cats are at lower risk for heartworm disease than outdoor cats, but there’s no guarantee a mosquito won’t buzz into your house through an open door or window—and it only takes one bite to do the damage. A North Carolina study reported that 28 percent of cats diagnosed with heartworm disease were inside-only cats, so prevention products are smart to use in indoor cats as well as free-roamers.

Mosquitoes aren’t common where I live. Does my cat need prevention?
Yes. Cases of feline heartworm disease have been reported in all 50 states. The occurrence of heartworm disease is markedly lower in some states, but mosquitoes are resilient little fellas and they’re showing up in more and more places. And don’t forget that the game changes when you travel. Anytime you pack your cat’s bags, especially if you’re heading to lake or coastal regions, you need to arm him with heartworm prevention.

OK, so my cat needs heartworm prevention. What does it involve?
The good news is that heartworm prevention products are some of the easiest to use, least expensive, and most effective items on the market. Your veterinarian knows all about these products and will help you decide which one is right for you and your cat.

Heartworms can’t hide
Heartworm larvae are virtually invisible, but if your cat is infected with them, they’ll show themselves. Most cats with early-stage disease experience heartworm-associated respiratory disease (HARD) signs. Rather than affecting the heart, the larvae affect the lungs and cause breathing problems often mistaken for asthma or allergic bronchitis. If your cat exhibits any signs of HARD, which are listed to the right, schedule an appointment with your veterinarian.

(This form is adapted from information provided by the American Heartworm Society and KNOW Heartworms. Visit knowheartworms.org to learn more.)
How to introduce a new kitten to your resident cat

Introducing a new cat or kitten to a household can be quite stressful, to all concerned.

Indeed, it can be easier to introduce a dog to a cat than a cat to a cat. This is because a cat won’t view a dog as competition for resources – it might have to get used to its excited behaviour and learn to stand up to it to avoid being chased, but this usually happens very quickly and much more easily than we imagine. The cat-cat thing is much more difficult.

It’s usually easier to introduce a new kitten than an adult cat – this tends to be less challenging for the resident cat. Kitten body language and movements are less threatening and they have yet to adopt the concept of territory and competing with others.

A little bit of extra effort at the beginning can make the difference between a good or bad relationship in the future.

Plan ahead

Your existing cat (or cats) will have established territory and the introduction of another, albeit a little kitten, is not necessarily going to be well received. It's important to ensure that the resident cat is not given the impression that it is under siege. When choosing your new kitten, have your cat’s personality in mind. For example, don’t purchase a very confident and outgoing kitten if your existing cat is timid or shy.

Arrange to collect your kitten on a day when you know you will have plenty of time to devote to settling it in, for example a couple of days over a weekend or during a time when you are not at work and the household is relatively peaceful. Some planning is necessary to prepare the home for the new arrival and the introduction process so, before the kitten arrives, purchase or hire a kitten pen (or large dog 'crate' of similar construction) and position it in a room that your existing cat doesn’t particularly favour, for example a spare bedroom. A kitten pen is a large metal cage with a solid floor that is normally used for kittingen queens or cats after surgery that need to be confined. It is quite large with plenty of room for a bed, toys, food, water and a litter tray. They are easily collapsible to enable the pen to be moved from room to room.

Think cat!
Think cat once your new kitten arrives and think scent first. Your home will have a scent 'profile' which is familiar and reassuring to your resident cat. It will consist of all those things that go on there, the dogs, the children, the hobby equipment, the cleaning materials, the food you like and so on, all mixed in with your cat's own scent. All the corners of your furniture will have been wiped by your cat's chin and face, the doorposts have been brushed by its coat and the carpet will often bear the marks of claw sharpening and the scent from its paws. Your home is well and truly possessed by your cat.

What you have to try to do is work in the scent of the new kitten so that it, too, is incorporated into the accepted household aroma. This comes down, initially, to you. You have to try to spread and mix the scents of the cats. You're working with the invisible, but have faith that there's actually something there! Stroking your cat and the kitten regularly and swapping bedding will enable the kitten's smell to become familiar and incorporated into the communal, household scent.

The first meeting

The door to the kitten's room should remain closed initially, allowing the kitten to exercise within that space when your other cat is not around. The kitten's food, water, toys and bed can be positioned outside the pen but the litter tray should remain within it. When the initial contact between kitten and cat takes place it may be helpful to distract the kitten with food.

The door to the room can be opened while the kitten is eating in the cage (with the cage door shut). It may be helpful, to allow the kitten to feel secure, if there is a covered box within the cage so that the kitten can hide from any unwanted attention as your other cat explores. If you wish, a small bowl of your cat's favourite food can be located a comfortable distance away to encourage eating in safety (bearing in mind that cats are solitary feeders) without being deterred by the sight of the kitten. Your cat should be allowed to explore the cage without intervention.

It is important to provide attention to the existing cat during this transitional period but not to exceed the amount normally accepted and enjoyed. Existing routines should be maintained to demonstrate that the kitten represents no loss of resources or enjoyment.

Once kitten and cat appear calm when in close proximity to each other (with the kitten inside and the resident cat outside the cage), the pen can be moved to other rooms (of increasing importance to the resident cat), leaving out those particularly favoured areas where the adult cat spends the majority of its time. Depending on progress, several weeks of this regime may be needed before opening the cage and letting the cats get to know each other, some introductions can take considerably less time and the kitten accepted fairly quickly. When the cage door is left open and the kitten is allowed to mix freely the contact between adult and kitten should still be closely supervised. It may be advisable to separate the kitten and adult cat when supervision is not possible, at least until their relationship is firmly established.

Both kitten and adult, in the long-term, should be provided with their own resources (bed, litter tray, food bowls, water bowls etc) positioned in separate locations and their own private areas where they can rest undisturbed by the other.

Advice section:
• How to guides [2]

© International Cat Care. The information provided here has been put together by experts in feline health, behaviour and welfare. However, it is not intended to be used as a substitute for going to the vet.

Links
What Indoor Cats Need

To enrich the lives of indoor cats, we have developed this "resource checklist"; and some suggestions for making changes.

✓ Informed Owners
As an owner, one of the most important things you can do for your cat is to educate yourself about feline idiosyncrasies. These resources will help you do just that.

Books
From the Cat's Point of View answers nearly every question the new cat owner could have and gives the experienced cat owner a look at life from the other side of the scratching post. If you only get one book, get this one!

Research has proven that you can make your cat smarter. Whether your cat is gifted or intellectually challenged, you can help him become a certified Felinestein -- a more effective communicator, better problem solver, and faster learner. Felinestein includes 100 games and activities, some for every type of owner and every personality of cat, that will get your cat exploring, thinking, and making decisions. Incorporating just a few of these challenges into your cat's life will spark his brain power and enrich his life. Most importantly, it will help the two of you bond on a whole new level.

Gina Spadafori, Universal Press Syndicate pet care columnist and host of AOL's "Gina Spadafori's Pet Connection," follows her educational and entertaining book Dogs for Dummies with Cats for Dummies, which she co-authors with Paul Pion, D.V.M., D.A.C.V.I.M., president of the Veterinary Information Network. If you own a cat or are considering cat ownership, Cats for Dummies is a book you’ll want to look at. This educational, comprehensive, and entertaining book is probably the closest you’ll get to a cat "owners' manual."
Litter Boxes

Provide At least one litter box per cat plus one and clean them daily.

Introduction

Elimination is a basic need for our feline friends. When we house them indoors it is crucial that we provide a place to eliminate that the cat finds attractive. The goal to keep in mind is to provide positive litter box experiences so the cat will continue to use the boxes provided. Cats will avoid anything that has been associated with a negative experience. If your cat has difficulties getting to or into the box, if something startles him while he is using the box, or if he has a negative experience while leaving the box he may avoid that box in the future.

Understanding the natural elimination habits of cats will help prevent problems from developing. Most cats are meticulously clean; they cover their waste and try to eliminate in areas that have not been used before. And although cats eliminate in response to basic biological drives, they also use eliminations to mark their territory. To meet their territorial needs, a good rule to follow is to provide one litter pan per cat plus one in a household. A litter box also should be located on every level of a multi-level home. Multiple boxes provide cats with appropriate places to eliminate and mark territory without offending you or other cats in the household.

The box

There are many shapes, sizes and styles of litter boxes on the market. By taking a little time, considering your cat and your home, you can find ones that work for both of you. Litter boxes need to be big enough for cats to enter and move around in. Larger pans are better because they provide a bigger area for the cat to eliminate in without stepping in the old eliminations, (remember that cats are meticulously clean and do not like getting themselves soiled.) Kittens, older cats and cats with health problems may need accommodations to permit easy entry and exit from the box.

Deciding on what type of litter box to use also can be a challenge. Uncovered boxes have easier accessibility, but may not provide the privacy some cats desire. A covered box may be more attractive to them, but it will need to be scooped and cleaned more often to keep it appealing to the cat. If you are not sure which box your cat prefers, provide both and keep using the one the cat chooses. If your cat uses both then keep both. If you do use a covered pan, never store the scooper or anything on the cover that could fall and startle the cat. Make sure the lid is secure so it can't move and startle the cat while she is using the box. If you need to change box type
(or litter type), offer the new box or litter beside the old one and let the cat
 tell you which she prefers.

**Choosing litter**

There are many different types of litter on the market that you may use. Always consider your cat whenever purchasing products. Once you find
a litter that your cat likes, stick with it. Abrupt changes can result in the cat
not using the litter box. Research has shown that most cats prefer fine-
grained litters; scoopable litters usually have finer grains than clay litters.
Many cats prefer unscented litters, and are put off by the odor of scented or
deodorant litters. This is also a good reason not to place room deodorizers or
air fresheners near the box.

Your cat’s health may be a consideration when choosing a litter. Cats
with upper respiratory infections, asthma, or other breathing problems will
need a dust-free substrate. After surgical procedures, you may need to
change the substrate in the litter box for a short period of time if your
veterinarian prescribes it. During this time, you may want to consider
placing the new substrate in another litter box where the original litter boxes
were, and carefully observe the cat’s response to the change. When it is
time to return to the original substrate, put the litter pans with the substrate
back in their original locations and observe your cat for any problems using
them.

*How much litter to use*

Some cats prefer lots of litter, whereas others want very little. You
can determine your cat’s preference by filling the box half way, then tipping
it so the amount varies from shallow at one end to deep at the other end.
Observe where the cat deposits her eliminations, toward the shallow or deep
end, and proceed to fill the box to that level.

**Location**

Litter boxes need to be placed in areas that provide easy access for
the cat, while providing some privacy and a clear escape route. They must
be located away from appliances and air ducts that could come on
unexpectedly, and in an area that another animal or human cannot sneak up
on your cat and startle her while she is “doing her business”. If you place
the box in an area that has a door, you will need to wedge the door open to
prevent the cat from getting trapped in the area. These factors should be
considered for all areas where you place a litter box. You may want to place
a rug or placemat under the litter pan to avoid scattered litter around the
box, to make it easier to keep the area clean.

**Cleaning**

Litter pans need to be scooped daily. Clean the litter pans once a week
with water and a non-scented soap. Weekly cleaning is just a general
guideline; if you have more than one cat, or if circumstances dictate, then you may need to clean the boxes more often. Never use ammonia or strong smelling cleaners for this job. A cat’s urine contains ammonia compounds and strong cleaner’s may be toxic to the cat. A thin layer of baking soda placed on the bottom of the box will help absorb odors without repelling your cat between scoopings. Odor shouldn’t be a problem if the litter box is kept clean. If you find the odor offensive, your cat may also find it offensive and not want to eliminate there.

✓ **Scratching**

You already know that cats like to scratch, but why and how can you encourage "proper" scratching? Scratching is a natural behavior for cats. Cats scratch to stretch their muscles, shed old cuticles, sharpen their claws, and leave scent marks. Even when declawed, cats retain the instinct to scratch. Scratching posts provide cats with an outlet for their instinct to scratch while at the same time saving your furniture and carpets! To choose the right scratching post for your cat, consider the following:

**What does your cat like to scratch?**

Choose a scratching post that is similar to the material your cat most likes to scratch. Most, but not all, cats prefer scratching posts made out of rough material they can shred. Sisal (a coarse natural fiber) scratching posts are ideal because they are satisfying to scratch and tough enough to stand up to repeated use. Vertical (upright) and horizontal (flat) scratching posts are available in a variety of sizes and materials including sisal, carpet and cardboard. Cats that scratch chair legs or the corners of your couch may prefer a vertical scratching post. Make sure that vertical scratching posts are tall enough so your cat can stretch up while she scratches. Cats that scratch rugs and carpets may prefer a horizontal scratching post or mat. Scratching posts should be stabilized to ensure that they don’t move or tip over and scare your cat while she is using them.

**Where does your cat scratch?**

Cats scratch to leave scent marks that define their territory and tell other cats they have passed through. They will often scratch prominent objects near sleeping areas and room entrances. Therefore, scratching posts should be located in these and other "public" parts of the house that the whole family uses. In multi-cat households there should be several scratching posts, both vertical and horizontal, located throughout the house. These posts should be placed in areas where the cats congregate and along
their routes to common areas such as food and water bowls, and litter boxes. Setting up multiple scratching posts provides the cats with an acceptable place to leave their mark without ruining furniture and carpets.

**What if my cat won't use the scratching post?**

Considering your cat's demonstrated preferences, substitute similar objects for her to scratch. Place the scratching post near the object you want the cat to stop scratching. Cover the inappropriate objects with something your cat will find unappealing, such as double sided sticky tape, aluminum foil, sheets of sandpaper or a piece of plastic carpet runner with the pointy side up. You may give the objects an objectionable odor by attaching cotton balls soaked with a citrus scent or perfume. Don't use anything that could harm the cat if she ingests it though, and be careful with strong odors because you don't want the nearby acceptable objects to be associated with the unpleasant smell.

When your cat is consistently using the scratching post, it can be moved very gradually (no more than a few inches each day) to a location more suitable to you. It's best, however, to keep the scratching post as close to your cat's preferred scratching locations as possible.

**Trimming your cat's nails**

Nail trims are an easy, and often overlooked, way to reduce damage from scratching. You can clip off the sharp tips of your cat's claws as often as necessary. There are several types of nail trimmers designed especially for cats. These are better than your own nail clippers because they won't crush the nail bed.

Before trimming your cat's claws, accustom her to having her paws handled and squeezed. You can do this by gently petting her legs and paws while giving her a treat to make it a more pleasant experience (it helps to do this before feeding while you’re training her). Gradually increase the pressure so that petting becomes gentle squeezing, as you'll need to do this to extend the claw. Continue with the treats until your cat tolerates having her feet handled.

When she is ready, apply a small amount of pressure to the cat's paw, with your thumb on top of her paw and your index finger underneath, until a claw is extended. Near the cat's nail bed you should be able to see a pink area, called the "quick", which contains small blood vessels. **Don't** cut into the pink portion of the nail because it will bleed and be painful for the cat. Cut off just the sharp tip to dull the claw.
Go slowly with your cat or she may become fearful of having her nails trimmed. To begin with, trim just one foot (or nail) each day. As your cat becomes accustomed to having her nails clipped you can trim all four feet at the same time.

If you prefer not to trim your cat's nails, you can purchase soft plastic caps that fit over the nail. Nail caps are available under the brand name Soft Paws and are available in a variety of sizes and colors. For more information on nail caps please visit www.catscratching.com.

✓ **Resting Areas**

It may seem like all they do is sleep, but there is a method behind cats’ narcoleptic tendencies.

Cats are at their most vulnerable while sleeping, so they prefer to rest in areas where they feel safe and secure. Desirable resting areas typically are quiet, comfortable locations where the cat can get away from other members of the family. Your cat may choose to get out of the way by resting on top of the kitchen cupboards or under the bed, or she may like to sleep curled up in her cat tree or on your bed or sofa.

Owners who prefer the cat to stay off of the bed and other furniture can encourage the cat to rest elsewhere by providing a refuge in a quiet part of the house. A refuge is a less-traveled or out-of-the-way area of the home where the cat has access to all of the necessities; a bed, food, water, a litter box, a scratching post, perch, and toys (see Pg 5 for a detailed description of a refuge). Cat beds can be purchased, but snug blankets and towels are just as appealing to cats and are easy to wash. The refuge should be a place where your cat feels safe and comfortable, for example a bedroom or back room. Your cat can retreat to her refuge whenever she wants to rest.

**Wherever your cat chooses to rest it is important not to disturb her.** Just as you may not want to be bothered while you are asleep or resting, neither does your cat. Respect your cat's privacy when she is resting and she will be more likely to seek you out when she is ready to interact.
Perches
Everyone likes a pleasant view, and cats are no exception.

“I need to know what is going on around me. I am curious. I am a cat. I can hear sounds coming from outside and smell lots of strange things, so I need to see what is happening out there. I want to know that I am safe. If I can hear it and smell it but can’t see it, it might frighten me.”

Cats like to climb, so a perch provides a safe and private place to watch the action from above. A perch is anything that allows your cat to lie, sit, sleep or look outside from above. A perch is a must have for your cat. Perches come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. You can get perches that attach to a windowsill or you could custom build a perch. More than one perch is great so your cat can look outside at different angles. You can even place a couch, sofa, chair, or sturdy table in front of a window, so your cat can look outside. If you really want to get creative, you can make the scenery more attractive by hanging a bird feeder in the yard and/or plant pretty flowers to attract bees, butterflies, and other insects. This will keep your cat interested and she may sit on her perch for hours looking outside.

“I may feel safer if I can sleep somewhere high. If you are having a problem with finding a suitable area for a perch, watch me and I will show you where I feel comfortable, usually by curling up in a ball and falling asleep.”

If you prefer an area different than where your cat chooses, you will need to offer her treats and kind words as you coax her to or place her in the area you would like for her to use. Cats respond better if you entice to encourage the behaviors you want rather than reprimand to discourage those you don’t want (don’t we all?).
Toys - Cats need recreation too!

- **Identifying your cat’s toy (prey) preference**
  There are many different kinds of toys for cats that you can buy, or make yourself. **Cats like toys that do something.** Toys that squeak, chirp, jitter, swing or vibrate remind them of moving meals, enticing them to interact. The first toy you might try is a furry mouse that makes noise and moves. Some even have catnip in them! You can just roll it past your cat on the floor to catch her attention; she’ll let you know if it looks like lunch. Each cat is an individual; some like some toys better than others, so just offer a few and they will show you what they like!

  **Cats also like toys that have a wand or stick with a toy dangling from the end of a string.** They make her feel like she’s using her natural quickness and agility to catch something, and it lets her interact with you too. Just let the toy dangle in front her, then slowly drag it away. Sometimes she can get carried away attacking it, so please be sure she can’t bite or chew off a piece that she could choke on.

  Balls are another great item to use; they provide the cat with chase and capture. Cats are very good at swatting balls. Things that move on their own also fascinate them, so balls (like ping pong balls) and furry little mice toys that move are great. They also like toys they can catch, pick up and toss in the air. You can also fill balls with food or treats for your cat to play with; this allows your cat to feel like she can have a hunting and stalking session, and catch her own meal.

  There is no set number of toys your cat needs, but variety is key to keep her from getting bored with the toys. It often works best to have a batch of toys that can be rotated a few at a time to keep your cat interested. You can rotate them in different sequences to make the old toys seem new and exciting. Without this, your cat will just get bored, sleep twenty-three hours a day, and maybe gain weight, or maybe carve out some pattern in your furniture. Your cat might love a certain toy so much that they start sleeping next to it. When this occurs, they are telling you they’d like to keep it, and not have it included in the toy rotation.

  Simple things often make great toys, like crumpled up paper balls, the plastic rings off of milk jugs, the center rolls from toilet paper, cotton-tipped swabs, paper towels, lots of things. You can even stuff old cotton socks with cotton balls and a little catnip, then tie a knot in the end. Cats need an assortment of toys they can roll, pounce on, capture and sink their teeth
into, carry and chase. **As long as it is safe for your cat**, then she may use it.

Also because of their hunting heritage, cats like visual stimulation. If they don’t have (or can’t get to) a window to look out of, you could buy or make a videotape from a nature show that has live action. They especially like to watch birds, fish, rodents and insects. These videos are great once in awhile when you can’t be around to play with them.

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**Identifying your cat’s toy (prey) preferences**

Most cats prefer to hunt specific creatures. For example, some cats prefer to chase mice, while others may prefer to catch birds or bugs. Identifying your cat’s “prey preference” allows you to buy or make toys that your cat will be more likely to play with rather than ignore. You can identify your cat’s prey preference by paying close attention to the way he/she reacts to toys with specific qualities:

1. Find a number of toys or objects that resemble birds. Examples include feathers, stuffed toys covered in feathers, objects suspended in air, and toys making chirping noises.

2. Entice your cat to play by making each object move and fly through the air. Does your cat follow the object? Does he follow all of the objects or ignore most of them? Take note.

3. Next, put those objects out of kitty’s sight, and try objects resembling mice, such as fur, stuffed animals, furry mice, and balls. How does your cat react when you make each of these objects move? Does kitty want to chase it? Or is he waiting for you to bring the feathers back out?

4. Try both “bird toys” and “mouse toys” at the same time by alternating them about every 20 seconds. Which does kitty prefer? Does he prefer some of each kind? Maybe he prefers both birds and mice!

5. Finally, put all of these toys away, and try toys resembling bugs. You can try a laser toy, a string with a knot on the end, and some dry food or treats tossed across the floor. How does your cat react? Try to alternate with “bird toys” and “mouse toys” to see which prey is best.

6. If your cat seems to enjoy feathers and/or objects in the air, choose toys resembling birds. If your cat prefers furry toys and/or toys moving on the ground, choose objects resembling mice. If your cat likes tiny objects with lots of movement, choose toys resembling bugs.

7. Be creative! Once you know what types of creatures your cat would like to hunt, think of the qualities those creatures possess and find toys with the same qualities.

8. Think like a cat! When you look for potential toys for your cat, imagine what kind of animal it might resemble. After all, a ball of paper is not just a ball of paper... it’s lunch!
KITTENS – GETTING OFF TO A GOOD START

How best should I introduce my new kitten to my home?
Your interaction with your new kitten begins on the ride home. Cats should always be transported in some kind of carrier in the car. By teaching your kitten to ride in a confined location you are providing safety as well as starting a routine that you can maintain for future car rides. Upon arriving at home, place the kitten in a small, quiet area with food and a litter box. If the kitten is very tiny, a small litter box with low sides may be necessary at first. If possible, duplicate the type of litter material used in the previous home (See our handout on ‘House-training – using the litter box’).

Set up a safe and secure area where you can leave your kitten when you are not available for supervision. This location should have a food bowl, water bowl, litter box, play toys, a scratching post and a resting area; be sure it is big enough to accommodate all these things. Since it is advisable to feed your kitten multiple small meals throughout the day, you may choose to also provide a feeding area in this room. Make sure to inspect the area for nooks and crannies where a kitten might hide or get stuck. All kittens and cats will need time to investigate their new surroundings. For a new kitten this is a more manageable task if you limit the available space initially. Be sure that any area where your kitten is allowed to roam has been effectively cat-proofed, which includes anywhere the kitten can jump or climb. Potentially dangerous items such as electric cords and items that might be chewed or swallowed (such as thread, rubber bands, paper clips, children’s toys) should be booby trapped or kept out of reach (See our handout on ‘Controlling undesirable behavior in cats’). After your new kitten has had some quiet time in a restricted location, slowly allow access to other areas of the home under your supervision.

Kittens are natural explorers and will use their claws to climb up onto anything possible. In the first few weeks, slow access to the home will allow exploration as well as the ability to monitor the kitten’s behavior.

What should I do if I have other pets?
Although some kittens may show fear and defensive postures toward other pets in the home, most young kittens are playful and inquisitive around other animals. Therefore, it is often the existing pets that can pose more of a problem. If you know or suspect that your adult dog or cat might be aggressive toward the kitten, then you should seek professional behavior advice before introducing the pets to each other.

The kitten should be given a safe and secure area that provides for all of its needs (as above) and introductions with the existing family pets should be carefully supervised. At the first
introduction there may be no immediate problems, and reinforcement of desirable responses may be all that is required.

If there is some mild anxiety on the part of your dog then introductions should be controlled, gradual, supervised and always positive. Your new kitten could be placed in a carrier or on a leash and harness so that it will not provoke your dog. Then using a leash for control, favored rewards and training commands, encourage your dog to sit or stay calmly in the presence of the cat. Dogs that are not well trained to settle on command may need their training reviewed and improved before introduction. Alternatively a leash and head halter could be used for more immediate control and safety. Calm investigation should then be encouraged and reinforced. (See our handout on using a head halter). Any initial anxiety on the part of the dog or kitten should soon decrease and, if the dog is prevented from rough play and chasing, the kitten should quickly learn its limits with the dog, including how to avoid confrontation by climbing or hiding. Initially it would be best to keep a dog and a kitten separated unless supervised. If, after some cautious initial introductions, there were still the possibility of aggression or injury then a behavior consultation would be advisable.

Most adult cats are fairly tolerant of kittens, so that keeping the kitten in its own area, and then allowing introductions when the cats are eating or playing, should help to decrease any initial anxiety. A leash and harness or a crate can be used to control one or both of the cats during initial introductions. A synthetic cheek gland scent, either as a spray or diffuser, may also be useful for easing introductions. Most cats and kittens will soon work out their relationship on their own, without injury. However, if there is a threat of aggression, then details of a gradual introduction program can be found in our handout ‘Feline aggression: territorial and fear aggression to household cats’.

**How can I prevent problems from developing?**

The key to preventing behavior problems is to identify and provide appropriate outlets for all of the needs of the kitten. This is especially important for the indoor cat since all of its play, predation, exploration, scratching, elimination and social needs will need to be channeled into acceptable indoor options. Sexual motivation can be reduced by neutering. Most of the physical activity of an outdoor cat would be focused on the hunt or on predatory and social play. Interactive play should therefore be designed as substitutes. To provide multiple predatory play sessions, use wands and movable toys or small light toys of plastic, fabric, feathers or fleece, that can be batted, chased and retrieved. Feeding can be broken up and made more interactive by feeding multiple small meals, some of which can be given in foraging toys, stuffed into feeding toys, or hidden inside bags and boxes. A cat’s interest in exploration might be addressed by providing new toys that can be batted and chased, and new areas to explore such as paper bags and cardboard boxes. Interest might be stimulated and maintained by hiding food treats or catnip in the toys, exploration and climbing areas. In addition to social play session with owners, highly social and playful cats may also benefit from having a second social and playful cat in the home. A comfortable blanket or rug for
napping, counters, shelves or play centers for perching, posts for scratching, and a proper litter area for elimination round out most of the cat’s needs. One important rule of thumb is that each cat is different; you must choose the types of play and toys that are most appealing to your cat and most appropriate for your household. (For more information, see our handout on play and investigative behavior).

**Can I prevent my cat from becoming overly fearful?**
Most kittens are highly social, but sociability and social play might begin to wane after two months of age. Therefore as soon as the kitten is obtained you should make every attempt to introduce the kitten to a wide variety of people (various ages, races, and infirmities) a wide variety of environments, other pets, and as many new stimuli (e.g. noises, car rides, elevators) as possible. One way to help insures a positive relationship with each new person, pet, place and event is to give the kitten one of its favored treats or toys with each new meeting and greeting (See our handout on kitten socialization and fear prevention).

**How can I teach my cat to enjoy handling?**
Depending on the personality and early experiences as a kitten, your cat may enjoy, accept, or dislike certain types of handling, from petting to bathing. In order for the cat to learn to accept and enjoy a variety of types of physical contact from humans, it is critical that the human hand only be associated with positive experiences and that all physical punishment is avoided. Begin with those types of handling that the cat enjoys or is willing to accept, and provide small treats at each of the first few sessions. Once the cat learns to associate food with these sessions, slightly longer or more intense sessions can be practiced. This type of handling can be used to help the cat become accustomed to, and perhaps enjoy, patting, grooming, teeth brushing, nail trimming, and even bathing. Over time you can introduce a brush or comb so that you can help keep your cat’s coat clean and free of mats. Regular grooming will also help decrease hairball formation. Never force this type of handling upon your cat, as any negative experience will only make the problem worse and the cat more resistant to further handling.

It is important to remember that physical discipline is inappropriate. It can scare your cat and make him or her afraid of being picked up or held. To help with problems you might encounter, please see our handout on controlling undesirable behavior in cats.

**Are there other things I should train my cat to do?**
It can be very useful and enjoyable to train your cat to a few simple commands such as to “come” when he is called. This can be accomplished by starting early. Take either a food treat or the cat bowl and show it to your kitten while slowly moving away from the kitten and at the same time saying his name and the word “come”. As the kitten follows and comes to you, give him the treat or food. With each repetition start a bit further away. Always reward the kitten when he gets to you with praise and a food treat. Remember not to proceed too quickly and make sure the kitten is successful each time. As the kitten learns the task, gradually phase out food rewards to a more variable schedule but always use praise and petting. Over time, your kitten should eagerly come when called. Similarly the pet can be encouraged to sit or give a paw. Use food lures to encourage the behavior and, when the pet responds consistently, add an appropriate word just before the cat displays the behavior.

Training your cat to accept the carrier without distress and fear will also come in handy over its lifetime. Using food rewards, delectable food, and play toys, you can entice the kitten to enter and explore the carrier. When the cat has voluntarily entered the carrier, the door can be briefly closed and then re-opened. Each time, try to leave the kitten in a bit longer before allowing him to exit. Be sure to never allow the kitten out when it cries or scratches at the crate or he will
associate those behaviors with escape. Instead wait until the kitten is calm and quiet, praise him and allow him to exit. Do not keep him in longer than he can be good during the initial training; gradually increase the time inside. If car travel will be frequent, short trips can be taken for practice to get the kitten used to traveling in the car. In some cases a very large cat crate can be used as a safe haven for your kitten and can also accommodate litter box, food and water. Feliway™ might help some cats to more quickly adapt to their carrier.

In summary, a cat can become very demanding of attention, play and affection. Begin early to teach your kitten how to ask nicely for interaction. Obnoxious behavior such as swatting, excessive vocalization, biting and pouncing should not be tolerated. If your kitten begins to exhibit these behaviors, quickly and quietly leave the area and cease all interactions. Once the kitten is calm and quiet, call him over and resume interactions. The goal is for the kitten to learn that calm, quiet responses get your attention, not wild or aggressive ones. For this to be effective you must be certain that you make time each day for appropriate interactions with your cat that include play, petting, grooming and naturally meeting his needs for food, water and a clean litter box.

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FELINE SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND FEAR PREVENTION IN KITTENS

What is socialization?
Socialization is the process during which the kitten develops relationships with other living beings in its environment.

What is habituation?
As cats develop, there are numerous stimuli (sounds, smells, sights and events) that, when they are unfamiliar, can lead to fear and anxiety. Habituation is the process of getting used to and not reacting to those stimuli by continuous exposure under circumstances that have no untoward consequences.

What is localization?
Localization is the process during which the kitten develops attachment to particular places.

Why are these terms important?
Cats that receive insufficient exposure and contact with people, other animals and new environments during their first two months may develop irreversible fears, leading to timidity or aggression. Expose your kitten to as many stimuli (people, places and things), when they can most effectively socialize, localize, and habituate to these stimuli. The first 1 to 3 months of life are the most critical periods in the social development of the cat.

Are cats a social species?
While they are fairly independent and can do well on their own, cats are quite social. Although feline social behavior has not been as extensively studied as for the dog, the domestic cat is much more social than has been traditionally reported. There are many situations where cats live together in groups and interact in a friendly manner. The composition of these groups differs from dog groupings. Usually they consist of mothers, daughters, aunts and grandmothers; female cats that are related. In large colonies, there may be many smaller related groups sharing the same space. Male cats will leave the group, but return for breeding. Males that have been neutered join the group in much the same way as females. Colonies of feral (wild) cats will be found in areas where food is abundant and shared, such as barns, dumpsites or around fishing ports. The cats in the group will allogroom (lick each other) and allomark (rub against each other). They will share the raising of kittens, fostering others from different litters.
**Do cats have “personalities”?**
Research has shown that it may be possible to classify cat "personalities" similar to what has been done for dogs. One such study identified cats that were shy, timid or fearful and those that were confident. The timid cats took significantly longer to approach persons and be held by them. Another study identified cats that were "shy" and those that were "trusting". That research noted that trusting cats were trusting regardless of where they encountered people, while shy cats were more fearful the further from home they were encountered. Based on these and other studies there are two common personality types: (a) sociable, confident and easygoing; (b) timid, shy and unfriendly. Some other research has also indicated an active aggressive type as well. What influences the development of personality type? Not surprisingly studies have confirmed that not only is personality inherited from the mother, but also that friendliness specifically is, in part, inherited from the father.

**How does the mother cat (or queen) teach her kittens?**
Cats are very good at observational learning. This occurs when an animal watches a behavior being performed by another. The queen starts to teach her kittens at a young age. From the queen, kittens learn elimination behaviors and predatory behavior. Kittens will begin to spend time in the litter box at about 30 days of age and will learn appropriate litter usage through observation of the queen and certain olfactory (smell) cues. If allowed access to prey, the queen will begin to bring them to her offspring at about 32 - 36 days of age and teach them to hunt. The kittens will begin to be weaned and eat solid food at the same age. The choice of food is influenced by the queen. Play between kittens is an important part of social development, particularly for those kittens that will be housed with other cats later in life.

**What can I do to improve my chances of having a social non-fearful cat?**
**Selection:** The genetics of an individual cat plays a critical role in how sociable, playful, fearful, excitable, or domineering a kitten will become. The first issue in helping to ensure that a kitten will be friendly and social when it grows up is to choose an appropriate kitten for your family. Since cats have a variety of personality types, the question is whether these personality types can be determined at the time of selection. As kitten socialization begins to decline at about 7 weeks of age, selection testing may become increasingly more accurate after this age. Therefore assessing older kittens and adult cats may provide more accurate information. The behavior of the parents, especially the father, as well as the behavior of any offspring from previous litters may be of even greater value at predicting adult behavior.

Assessment of young kittens is likely of limited value if the kittens are still progressing through the primary socialization period, and the assessment of the parents may provide just as much information.

**Early handling:** Kittens that are stimulated and handled from birth are more confident, more social, more exploratory, faster to mature and are better able to handle stress as they develop. Early handling of kittens decreases their approach time to strangers and increases the amount of time that they stayed with them. The more handling the better; but even 15 minutes a day will help to improve later behavior. Regular and frequent handling from birth increases the likelihood that the kitten will relate well to people.
when placed into a home after weaning at 6 to 9 weeks of age. Therefore, kittens obtained from a breeder or home where they have had frequent contact and interaction with the owners are likely to be more social and less fearful as they develop.

**Socialization:** The two most important factors in how social a cat becomes with people are its genetic personality, and the amount of socialization it receives during the sensitive period of socialization which is thought to be 3 - 7 weeks of age. Certainly, the greater exposure a kitten has to humans of all ages, other pets and novel situations, the better adjustment that kitten will have. Therefore the best options may be to obtain a kitten from a home where good socialization has already taken place, or to obtain a new kitten prior to 7 weeks of age and ensure immediate socialization.

**How can I assist my new kitten’s socialization?**
Introduce your kitten to many new people and situations as possible. If the kitten is meeting a person or other pet for the first time and remains playful and inquisitive be certain to encourage and reinforce the kitten for its actions, and repeat the exposure regularly with a variety of similar stimuli. If however the kitten is fearful or withdrawn, a more gradual introduction while pairing favored treats and play with each exposure may improve the relationship fairly quickly. Be certain that the stimulus moves slowly so as not to startle the kitten. Strangers may be able to offer treats or stimulate play using a favored chase toy. However, when introducing a kitten to other animals, the stimulus should be well restrained and calm so that the kitten’s fear is not enhanced, and it can be motivated to take the treats and food for the owner. There may be a great deal of individual variation, with some cats quickly adapting to new people and other pets, and others requiring a very gradual program of desensitization and counter-conditioning. (See our handout on desensitization and counter-conditioning for more details).

In order for the kitten to develop and maintain good social skills with other cats it would be advisable to introduce the kitten into a home with other cats, or to consider obtaining more than one kitten. A lack of ongoing and regular social interactions with other cats may make it difficult to introduce your cat to other cats later in life. In addition, cats that lack other cats as playmates may target the owners as substitute playmates for swatting, chasing, pouncing, and biting.

**How best should I introduce my new kitten to my home?**
Your interaction with your new kitten begins on the ride home. Cats should always be transported in some kind of carrier in the car. By teaching your kitten to ride in a confined location you are providing safety for your cat in future car rides. Upon arriving at home, place the kitten in a small, quiet area with food and a litter box. If the kitten is very tiny, a small litter box with lowered sides may be necessary at first. If possible, duplicate the type of litter material used in the previous home (See our handout on House-training).

The first place you put your new kitten should be inspected for nooks and crannies where a kitten might hide or get stuck. Often in a new environment, a kitten may look for a secluded place to hide. However, all kittens and cats will need to investigate their new surroundings. For a new kitten this is a more manageable task if you limit space available and initially supervise the kitten. When cats do investigate they use a random method of search. After your new kitten has had some quiet time in a restricted location, slowly allow access to other areas of the home.

Kittens are natural explorers and will use their claws to climb up onto anything possible. In the first few weeks, slow access to the home will allow exploration as well as giving you the ability to monitor the kitten's behavior. Monitor for any stimuli, rooms or areas that seem to frighten the cat, and use favored treats and play to encourage further exposure.
**HOUSE TRAINING – USING THE LITTER BOX**

*Do I need to train my new kitten to use a litter box?*

Most cats by nature use a soil type surface for elimination. By providing a litter box with an appropriate and appealing substrate (material), few cats will need to be trained to use it. At about 30-36 days of age kittens leave the nest to search out a loose substrate for elimination. The kitten learns specific areas and substrates to use by observation of the queen (mother). Although some cats, especially those on their own property will dig and bury their wastes, many cats only partly cover their feces especially if they are off of their home territory. Some cats do not bury urine or stools at all, even on their own property and, for obvious reasons these cats may prove harder to litter train.

*How can I help train my new cat to use the litter box and area that I have selected?*

Initially it is best that the kitten be confined to a small area with an appropriate sized litter box. This allows you to take advantage of a cat’s tendency to eliminate in a loose material. As long as the kitty litter is easily accessible and is the only loose substrate available, very little effort should be required to litter box train the kitten. About the only other indoor area that might be equally or more appealing to some cats is the soil around houseplants. Ensuring that the cat is prevented from getting into houseplants, except when you are around to supervise deals with this problem. Another option is to move the houseplants into a room where the cat does not have access, or to place decorative pebbles or rocks over top of the soil. Kittens may need to eliminate after they eat, after they wake up and after play. At those times, you might place the kitten in its litterbox and praise or give a treat for elimination. A kitten does not need to be confined continuously, but should be supervised to prevent accidents and frequently brought back to the appropriate elimination location. A little of the urine or stool odor from previous elimination should help to attract the cat back to the box. In fact, if the kitten soils in a location other than its box on the first attempt, clean up the area thoroughly using a product that is designed to neutralize cat urine odor (see our behavior resources handout for more details), and perhaps even move a small amount of the stool or a few drops of the urine to the box to attract the cat to that area. If there is more than one cat in the home, at least one more litter box should be added to the home. By confining the kitten to an area with its own box, the kitten can establish regular litter habits without competition or threats from the other cats. This also provides for a more gradual and cautious introduction of the kittens to the other cats.
What type of litter material should I use?
There are many types of litter materials available today. These include clay litter, fine “clumping” litter, plastic pearls, silica, recycled newspapers, wood shavings and many others. Some have materials added to control odor although scented litters may be aversive to some cats. The type you choose is up to you, although you might wish to seek guidance as to which litter types are safest if you have a kitten that tends to eat litter (as some young kittens do). Since the kitten will first start eliminating by following the cues of the queen, continuing with the same litter as used in the first home is helpful. Some studies have found that clumping litter may be preferable to more cats.

What size and type of litter box should I buy?
Initially, the size of the litter box should be determined by the size of the kitten or cat. A very small kitten may need a box with shorter (lower) sides or a ramp for easier access. As the kitten grows, a larger box is generally more appropriate. Some owners prefer litter boxes with covers on them. This is acceptable if it is acceptable to the cat. You need to be sure that the cat can negotiate the opening by stepping into it and that the cat is not too large to fit into the opening. Over time be certain to increase the size of the box if necessary to accommodate the cat’s needs.

Where should I put the litter box?
The litter box should be placed in a location that is easily accessed by the cat, yet out of the way. Try to avoid congested household areas. The cat should have some privacy and quiet to eliminate. Laundry and furnace rooms are often used but be sure that noise from household equipment is not disruptive and aversive to your cat. Make sure that the cat does not get locked out of the room at a time when it may have to eliminate. Try to put the litter box in an area that is convenient for you to check on and keep clean. Do not put food and water bowls immediately next to the litter box. If there are dogs in the home, then the litter box should be located where the cat can eliminate without being bothered by them.

How often should I clean the litter box?
One of the most important factors in continued litter box usage by house cats is cleanliness. Cats are very fastidious animals, and spend time each day making sure their coat, feet and face are clean. One can assume that they would like a clean place to eliminate. The number of cats in the home and litter usage determines the time between litter cleaning. Fecal material should be removed after each bowel movement, if possible and the box should be cleaned or scooped of urine wastes on a daily basis, whether the litter material type is clumping or plain. Litter should be changed weekly. Some clumping litters form fairly hard clumps (which may not be flushable) that are easy to scoop in their entirety and leave little residue behind. These types of litter may only need to have the box cleaned every few weeks; however remember to refill the litter to maintain sufficient depth after each scooping. Remember that each cat is an individual. Your cat may like more frequent cleaning of the litter box to maintain good usage patterns. Some cats dislike the odor of the cleansers used to clean litter boxes, so rinse the box thoroughly after each cleaning. A number of products are self-cleaning and this can be
particularly appealing to some cats. However some cats might be frightened of the motors and cleaning mechanisms.

How many litter boxes do I need in my home?
The number of litter boxes needed depends on the number of cats, the size of the home, the temperament of the cat, and other pets in the home. When there are multiple cats, multiple pans should be available in different locations, not all side-by-side in one place. Because there can be varied interactions between individuals, multiple boxes in multiple locations allow housemates to avoid one another if they so choose. Even for only one cat, two boxes may be appropriate depending on the layout of the home and the individual preferences of the cat. Some cats prefer one box for urine and one for stool. Some physical limitation may prevent a cat from climbing stairs and so a box in the location the cat frequents is needed. In general, there should be at least one litter box per cat; however, if soiling problems arise, most behaviorists advise one more box than the number of cats in the house.

What if the kitten does not use its litter box?
Should the kitten begin to eliminate in locations other than its litter box, first review the steps above. Is the litter in an area that is appealing and easily accessed by the cat? Is the litter box being cleaned often enough? Are there enough litter boxes for the number of cats? Try and determine what there is about the area that your cat is soiling that is so appealing to your cat. And perhaps most important is there anything about the area, box or litter that might be preventing its use (or scaring your cat)? To determine the most appealing litter for your cat, offer two or more different litters in the same type of box, side-by-side and see which one, if any, the cat uses most frequently. Next, determine the type of litter box the cat prefers by offering two or more litter box types side-by-side (each with the preferred type of litter). You can determine the cat’s preferred location by offering the preferred litter box with the preferred litter in two or more locations and determining which one, if any, the cat uses more frequently. If litter box problems persist, then additional guidance and perhaps a behavior consultation might be required. (Also see our handout on ‘House-soiling in cats’). If however, the cat begins to lift its tail, and spray urine onto vertical objects, then this is a marking behavior and would indicate that its time to consider neutering (if your cat is an intact male) or that an anxiety or territorial problem is emerging and professional guidance should be sought. (Also see our handout on Urine Marking in cats).

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KITTEN PLAY AND INVESTIGATIVE BEHAVIORS

*Kittens have a reputation for being playful – why is play so important to them?*

Play is a very important part of the feline world and kittens need the opportunity to play in order to learn vital adult skills both in communication and in hunting. From a very early age, they play with their littermates and with objects that they find in their environment. Indeed, play provides the ideal opportunity for kittens to investigate the world around them. Young kittens play using chasing and pouncing behaviors that seem to have their origin in predation. Predatory play is an integral part of feline play behavior and early learning. This play in a kitten is often aggressive and intense. During kitten development three different forms of play are used. Up to the point of weaning, most of the kitten’s playful interactions have been with the queen or with littermates and this form of play is described as social. At the time of weaning, kittens will begin to show more interest in objects in their environment and will begin to act out the behavioral sequences associated with hunting, by chasing and stalking moving objects as well as those that can be swiped, batted and propelled with a paw. This so-called object play is believed to be important in the development of eye-paw coordination and hunting skills, and the presence of an experienced hunting mother is believed to increase the kitten’s opportunity to observe the appropriate behaviors and develop its own hunting prowess. Locomotory play is fully developed at 10-12 weeks of age, and is important in the development of balance and agility. Since play is such an important component of kitten development, proper play and exercise should be encouraged.

*I have a 6-week-old kitten and he is very playful – how can I channel his play onto toys rather than the curtains and furniture?*

The image of young kittens hanging from the curtains is a very popular one for cartoonists, but it is not amusing for owners when their new pets are ripping their home apart and causing mayhem. The playful nature of your kitten is perfectly normal, and the important lesson for him to learn at this age is that play is only acceptable in certain situations and contexts. Obviously kittens cannot read labels or instruction booklets and therefore they need to be shown how to play with toys that you provide for them. However you can maximize their interest in the toys by ensuring that they cater to basic feline needs and have features that will naturally catch your kitten’s attention and imagination.

*What is the best way to play with my kitten?*
Kittens use multiple objects as prey items when they play. This play behavior consists of stalking, pouncing, jumping, biting and clawing. Small objects that can easily be moved with paws and grasped in the mouth or between the feet are often preferred. Avoid objects that are so small that they could be ingested and cause intestinal blockage. Some kittens like to play with a linear object like string. This can cause severe intestinal dysfunction and damage if eaten and should only be used under supervision.

Avoid playing with your hands as you interact with your kitten. This can be dangerous and lead to human injury. The moving hand can become an appealing play object and attempts at correction could aggravate the situation. Although a young kitten may not inflict damage, as it ages and continues to use the owner’s body for play, serious injuries can result.

Simulated prey stimulates cats, so that wands and toys that can be pulled along or dangled in front of the cat are generally most effective. Fishing rod type toys and long wands with prey type toys (feather toys, catnip mice) on the end can be used to encourage play without contact with the owner’s body. Young kittens will often fetch small fleece toys, or bat them across the floor.

**Why is my kitten always getting into mischief?**
Another important part of the development of young animals is the need for exploration and investigation of new objects and new environments. These behaviors can lead to damage to the home as well as injury to the kitten. Preventing these problems is quite simple; you accept your cat’s needs to play and investigate. When you are not around or available to supervise, the cat can be provided with a variety of toys that can be batted, chased or pounced upon. Toys stuffed with catnip, toys that release food when manipulated, battery operated or mechanical toys that the cat can paw or chase, and toys that can be dangled from doors or play centers are just a few of the self-play toys that are enticing to some cats. Your cat should also be provided with suitable opportunities and outlets for scratching, climbing, perching and relaxing (See our handout on scratching for a more detailed discussion). These could include posts and toys designed for scratching, shelves, counters, windowsills and play centers for perching, and paper bags, cardboard boxes or hidden treats for exploration. Cats that chew and scavenge might be provided with higher bulk foods, chew toys, dental foods, dental toys or even a small herb garden to try and satisfy this need (See our handout on destructive chewing in cats).

**How can I prevent damage when I am not available to supervise?**
When the cat cannot be supervised, leave it in a cat-proof area, with soft comfortable bedding and a litter box for elimination. Although a large dog kennel or cat crate may be an acceptable form of confinement for short departures, most cats can be confined in one or a few rooms that have been effectively cat-proofed. This allows the cat some freedom while preventing damage and injuries. Child locks and secure containers can be used to keep your cat out of cupboards or garbage cans. Any of your possessions or household objects that might be clawed, pounced on, explored, or knocked flying, should be either kept out of the cat’s reach or booby-trapped. Remember that with their excellent ability to jump and climb, damage prevention may also be needed far above floor level.

Booby-trapping (see below) can be used to teach your cat to “stay away” from specified areas by making the sites unpleasant. Before making an area unpleasant, the cat must have access to appropriate outlets to meet its innate needs. The cat should be provided with a post for scratching, some ledges or shelves for climbing and perching, and a few play toys that can be swatted, batted, or chased. Cat toys on springs and those that are hung from doors or play centers, ping-pong balls, whole walnuts, or catnip mice are often fun for cats to chase and attack. Cat play centers can be purchased or constructed to provide areas for perching and
scratching in a relatively small compact area. Some cats like to explore new objects, so a few empty boxes or paper bags (never plastic) will keep some cats entertained until the owner has time to play. Sometimes the best solution is to get a second cat for companionship and play. Be certain that the second cat is young, sociable and playful. See our handout controlling undesirable behavior in cats and controlling destructive chewing for additional help.

Although some people think of confinement, cat-proofing and booby-trapping as unnecessary or cruel, they are precautionary measures to keep the cat safe and prevent damage to the household when the owners are not available to supervise. Common owner complaints such as chewing on plants, scratching, climbing or playing in inappropriate locations, or elimination outside of the litter area, are just a few of the potential problems that can best be prevented with a little planning and forethought. Then, when a family member is home and available to supervise, your cat should be given more freedom to explore and become accustomed to those areas of the home where problems might otherwise occur.

**What problems are associated with play?**

There are a number of behavior problems that arise out of over-exuberant and inappropriate play. Some examples are cats that rambunctiously tear around the household, those that swat at or pounce on the owners (sometimes escalating into bites and injuries), and those that grasp, nip, bite or swat at the owners throughout the night. See our handout on play aggression in cats

**How can over-exuberant play and play attacks toward people be prevented?**

Before any attempts at stopping or interrupting the behavior are attempted, provide sufficient opportunities and outlets for play. Choose play toys and activities that are appealing to the individual cat. Since play that is initiated by the cat could potentially escalate into overly aggressive play, the owner should select play toys and initiate all play sessions. Sessions initiated by the cat should be ignored or interrupted using a distraction device, such as the ones in our handout on behavior management products.

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*This client information sheet is based on material written by Debra Horwitz, DVM, Diplomate ACVB & Gary Landsberg, DVM, Diplomate ACVB

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From your veterinarian

5 mouser myths debunked

You know your cat doesn’t have nine lives and black cats aren’t witches in disguise. But these tall tales have led to incorrect notions about cats. Here are often-heard feline health yarns, and how to unravel them.

1 Cats are aloof, unsocial creatures.
Contrary to popular belief, cats are social creatures and need interaction. Dogs wag their tails and bark in delight when you come home. Cats show affection by nuzzling your leg. Even though they’re not boisterous, they still want—and need—attention. Some cats do shun human affection, but these introverts don’t represent the whole feline species. In fact, lack of interaction can be an early sign of illness.

2 Indoor cats don’t need preventive medicine.
A cat doesn’t have to go outside to get sick, especially if it lives with other pets that do head out. When these outdoor pets come back inside, they can bring along—and pass on—all sorts of infections, from respiratory viruses to internal parasites. And fleas and mosquitoes can easily make their way into the house, then jump onto or bite an indoor cat.

3 Cats are independent and don’t need care.
Putting out extra food might satisfy their basic needs for a weekend alone, but if a cat gets sick—say from ingesting a foreign object or suffering a urinary tract blockage—while home by itself, it can be severely ill (or worse) by Sunday night when its owner returns.

4 Cats eliminate outside the litter box to be spiteful.
Instead, missing the box often signals an underlying medical condition, such as urinary tract disease or infection, kidney disease, or diabetes mellitus. It can also be a sign of arthritis, which makes getting into the litter box difficult. Or it can be a sign of litter box avoidance resulting from a variety of factors or a sign of territorial marking. When you notice your cat eliminating in the wrong place, contact your veterinarian immediately.

5 Cats don’t get heartworms.
Heartworms affect dogs and cats differently, but they do indeed affect cats. Heartworm disease has been reported in all 50 states. Unlike dogs, cats are troubled by heartworm larvae (juvenile heartworms) rather than mature adult heartworms. When the larvae arrive and when they die in cats’ lungs, they cause lesions that may lead to airway and arterial disease referred to as heartworm-associated respiratory disease (HARD). Cats that exhibit asthma-like symptoms may in fact be suffering from HARD. The disease can cause severe illness and death and approved treatments aren’t available, but it’s totally preventable with the proper use of preventive medication.
Myths about Feeding Cats Every Cat Owner Should Know

1. **Dry food is healthier for cats than canned food.** In the past, it was felt that dry food was better for cats than canned because it kept their teeth cleaner. Also dry food can be fed free choice to promote eating multiple small meals daily which simulates the cat’s natural eating habits. We now know that the progression of feline periodontal disease is not as affected by diet as it is in dogs. In addition, dry food is missing in certain amino acids, fatty acids, and vitamins that are found in canned food. The main difference is that canned food is much higher in meat than dry food and many of these essential nutrients for cats are only found in meat. Also dry foods are much higher in carbohydrates than canned food. Cats are relatively carbohydrate intolerant compared to other species. The commonality of diabetes mellitus in cats can be linked to excess carbohydrate over time found in dry cat foods. In short, cats were made for the Atkins diet.

2. **Overweight cats should be put on low calorie, high fiber diets.** Obesity in cats is an epidemic in America. Many are indoor cats that don’t exercise as they would if they were outdoors. Unfortunately, the outdoors generally isn’t a safe place for most cats due to cars, dogs, and viruses. Many cat owners have tried specific “diet” cat foods that are high in fiber, low in calories with no results. Part of the reason for that is the cat’s natural metabolism is not geared to use carbohydrates or fiber for energy. The carbohydrates are processed and immediately turned into fat instead of being burned for energy. Cats need low calorie diets, but they should be low in carbs and fat. Hill’s Science Diet M/D is an example of a diet food that comes close to that. You can also feed many overweight cats canned kitten food (in the right amount) and get them to lose weight because their bodies will use canned food for energy much more readily than dry foods.

3. **Cats need dry food to keep their teeth clean.** As stated above, the progression of periodontal disease in cats is not significantly associated with type of food as it is in a dog.

4. **Cats must be fed several times daily.** You only need to feed your cat once daily. Cats tend to eat until their protein requirements are met. Most will stop eating on their own once the need is met. They tend to nibble dry food all day long because they don’t perceive that their need is met. Consequently they get more calories than they need to get the correct amount of protein.

**Recommendations for Feeding Your Cat**

Generally, we recommend feeding your cat canned food only, once or twice daily. The canned food amount should be correct for the lean body mass of the cat. Maintenance feeding is different from feeding for weight loss. On average, you can feed a fit, 8lb cat leading a mild to moderate active lifestyle about 220 to 250 calories per day for maintenance. This is the equivalent of 2-3 3oz cans, 1 to 1 ½ 5.5oz cans, or 2-3 foil pouches per day. There is significant variability in calories per can between different flavors and/or brands of cat foods. Specific information on each flavor or brand is available on the internet.
Should I buy pet insurance for my pet? It’s a question many pet owners ask themselves. The answer is not always easy. Veterinary medicine has improved exponentially over the past several years. Many diseases that would have been unmanageable or fatal in the past can now be treated. Pets can have kidney transplants, heart surgery, lithotripsy, laser disk ablation, and many other advanced procedures that were unavailable even a decade ago. The list of new drugs available for improving the quality of life of our pets is phenomenal. All of these improvements, however, come with a price tag. Surgery for an intervertebral disk rupture may be $2500 to $3000. A prolonged hospital stay for severe pancreatitis could be as much as $5000 to $6000. Heart surgery may run $10,000. Pet insurance may make some of these treatments financially possible for pet owners faced with expensive, “life and death” treatment decisions.

On the other hand, pet insurance has some drawbacks. All pet insurance companies are in the business of making money. This means that most policy holders will pay more in premiums than they recoup from claims. If this were not true, the company would be bankrupt. In general, people should not think of pet insurance as a way to save money on veterinary expenses. Also, pet insurance companies vary greatly on what they cover. This is especially true for genetic or breed-related problems, preexisting diseases, and the age of the pet. Pet insurance is also not going to keep you from having to pay the veterinary bills at the time of service. Veterinarians and veterinary hospitals have neither contracts nor negotiations with pet insurance companies, and most, if not all, pet insurance companies take days to weeks to process claims. The pet owner must foot the bill initially and be reimbursed by the insurance company later.

So, here’s list of questions to ask yourself to assess your need for pet insurance.

1. If my pet had a severe illness or trauma, could I afford to do what I would like to be able to do for my pet? Don’t forget to factor in multiple pets. Unfortunately, they can all get sick together. If the answer is no, you might consider pet insurance. If the answer is yes, you might be better off putting the money you would have spent on premiums in a “pet emergency fund” instead. Your veterinarian can help you speculate on treatments you would like to be covered for and their costs.

2. What do I want my pet insurance to cover? Some companies offer partial coverage on routine wellness items such as vaccines, heartworm prevention, and dental prophylaxis. Some cover genetic disease such as hip dysplasia but with restrictions on age or amount covered. Some companies cover chronic disease but only for a limited time or fixed dollar amount. Lifetime coverage, coverage per illness, or coverage per year can also vary greatly between companies. Of course, the more coverage you purchase, the higher the premiums. The type of coverage you want will help you determine which pet insurance company and which insurance plan will best suit your needs. Your veterinarian can help speculate on which genetic or chronic diseases to which your pet may be susceptible.

3. Am I willing to take on the hassle of the paperwork and phone calls needed to get claims processed? In the human world, hospitals handle a great deal of the paperwork for health insurance claims. This is not true for pet
insurance. Pet owners are responsible for filling out claim forms, getting appropriate signatures and documentation, and mailing claims.

So, if you choose to look into pet insurance, the following websites will provide an excellent review of different companies and what’s available.

www.healthypet.com/PetCare/Petinsurance.aspx

www.pet-insurance-univeristy.com/

www.petinsurancereview.com/

http://www.healthypet.com/PetCare/PetInsurance.aspx

http://www.pet-insurance-university.com/

http://www.petinsurancereview.com/

If you found this information to be helpful or if you feel it was incomplete, please email feedback to admin@ahrdvm.com.
Stress triggers for cats

Are you contributing to your cat’s anxiety and behavior issues? It’s possible if you do any of the following:

1. **You punish your cat.** Swatting and hitting your cat only teaches it to fear your approach. Telling your cat “no” only interrupts the behavior. Instead, show your cat what you want it to do, and reward it for appropriate behaviors. Cats are very curious and agile—so give yours places to go and things to do, and keep potentially dangerous items picked up and put away.

2. **You assume your cat “knows” English.** Animals communicate using body language and are very good at figuring us out. Most people don’t bother teaching their cats to sit, much less any other cue—but it’s surprisingly easy to train them to do behaviors on cue. Just don’t assume your cat understands what you’re saying without teaching it what you want it to do first.

3. **You grab your cat’s head to tousle its hair.** Nobody likes to have their head grabbed and rubbed—cats are no different! Most cats prefer a few long strokes from head to tail; others prefer a small amount of gentle scratching around the chin or ears. Many cats get irritated by an extended period of repetitive stroking.

4. **You hug or kiss your cat.** Cats like to be able to move and escape situations. When we hold them tightly, they may become stressed, anticipating that something bad is going to happen.

5. **You don’t clean your cat’s litter box.** Nobody likes to use a dirty toilet—including your cat. Imagine not flushing your own toilet for three or four days! Ideally, the litter box should be scooped every time you notice waste. Otherwise, they should be scooped at least once daily. Most need emptied and cleaned every one to two weeks. Regular scooping also allows you to identify early signs of illness such as diarrhea, constipation, or excessive or lack of urination.

6. **Your cat’s litter box is in an inconvenient location.** The spot you’ve chosen for the litter box might work best for you, but a cat that has to negotiate humans of all ages, other pets, stairs, or loud appliances might feel like the journey is a suicide mission every time it needs to eliminate.

7. **You tempt your cat to play by wiggling your fingers or toes, then get angry when it bites or scratches you.** Cats naturally grab “prey” using their teeth and claws. Offer your cat the appropriate chew toys so it knows that hands are for loving—not biting!

8. **You leave your cat home alone with a jumbo-sized portion of food and one litter box while you go on vacation for a long weekend.** Especially for cats that eat quickly, this can be stressful because they’ll have no food left by the end of the weekend. Cats can become sick if they don’t eat every day. Timed feeders can be helpful in this situation. A self-cleaning litter box may also be a reasonable option, but don’t rely on it—it’s important that you pay attention to the frequency and quality of your pet’s eliminations so you can identify any changes that could indicate stress-induced health problems such as cystitis, constipation, and diarrhea.

9. **You use strong-smelling cleansers, deodorizers, and products containing alcohol.** Cats’ noses are sensitive, and these scents can be offensive to them. Be careful about the use of these products in your home or on your person. Some cats may even find the smell of hair spray, perfume, or cologne unpleasant.

10. **You add new cats to your home without an introduction period.** When an unrelated cat appears and tries to join a related group, it’s in the cats’ nature to attack and force the outsider to leave. Without a proper period of controlled, gradual introduction, the chance of aggression between cats and stress increases.

Information provided by Valarie V. Tynes, DVM, DACVB, Premier Veterinary Behavior Consulting, Sweetwater, Texas, and Colleen Koch, DVM, Lincoln Land Animal Clinic, Jacksonville, Ill.
MULTI-CAT HOUSEHOLDS - THE PROS AND CONS

I want to get a cat but someone told me I should get two together – is this true?
Cats were once considered to be solitary creatures but, while there are some solitary aspects to their behavioural patterns, we now know that, although there may be individual differences, they are in fact social animals who benefit from interaction with their own and other species. As a result of this knowledge there has been a move to promote ownership of more than one cat, and in particular to encourage owners to take on two cats at the same time. This can be beneficial as the cats play together and provide each other with both physical and mental stimulation. However, it is important to have an understanding of feline society if you are to take on two or more cats successfully.

If I am going to adopt two kittens at the same time, should I get them from the same litter?
Basically cats are family-oriented creatures that commonly live with their relatives. They are not very tolerant of outsiders and are less likely to cohabit harmoniously with a cat that they are not related to. For this reason the best combination of cats is actually littermates and if you are taking on more than one kitten it is certainly better to consider taking on two from the same litter. If you are not able to locate two littermates you can raise young kittens from different litters, provided that you take them on at a very early age, preferably before they are seven weeks old. Adopting two slightly older kittens may work out, but the general rule is that the younger the kittens are when brought together, the more easily they will accept each other as part of their social group.

If I already have a single cat, should I consider getting another cat to keep it company?
If your cat is an adult and is established within your home as the only cat, then you should think carefully about introducing another feline. The majority of cats are hostile to other felines, if they are not related, and there is certainly no guarantee that your cat will thank you for its new playmate. However, some cats, if they have been
sufficiently socialized to other cats or are particularly sociable (genetically) do benefit enormously from feline company. Therefore, the decision has to be made on a case-by-case basis. If your cat has been seen in the company of other cats without excessive fear or aggression, it may be possible to integrate a new cat into the household. However, in cases where your cat shows hostility to other cats, or hisses, growls, or marks territory if they enter your yard or garden, then obtaining another cat would not be advisable!

Keep in mind that relationships in cats are usually between pairs of cats. Just because your cat liked one cat, it may not mean that he will accept another. Some cats are naturally easy-going and friendly; others are timid and shy; still others are very assertive and active. Those differences in personality can have a profound effect on how two cats may get along. An easy-going cat may accept most other cats, while a timid and shy cat may be reluctant to accept another cat, depending on the new cat’s personality. An active and assertive cat may overwhelm quieter and more timid cats, making introductions difficult. Although, at first the existing housecat(s) may be more likely to have a problem with the new addition to the household, you might later find that it is the new cat that cannot adapt to the new home or the other cats in the home. Attempting to match personality types may be useful when seeking out another companion for your cat.

*If my cat was raised with its littermate from an early age but has now been left on its own, due to the death of its brother or sister, should I go and get another cat as a replacement companion?*

The bond between feline littermates is very special and when one of a pair dies before the other it is not uncommon for the remaining individual to show classic signs of feline grief. These include behaviors such as vocalization and searching for the missing sibling, as well as changes in basic behaviours such as feeding and seeking social interaction with owners. This grieving process is very variable in its duration, but it is not uncommon for it to last for months. While it is in progress, it is generally not advisable to take on another cat. Indeed, hostility toward another cat that is introduced when the resident cat is fearful, anxious, depressed or in ill health can be very intense and the likelihood of ultimate integration between the cats is very slim. Once the grieving process has passed and the cat has come to terms with the loss of its sibling, it may be possible to integrate a new housemate. But, you need to realise that any bond that is established between your cat and a newcomer will never be as strong as the one that existed between the original littermates. In fact, even if your cat has had a very close relationship to a previous cat, a new cat may not be welcomed into the household.

*I have decided to take on another cat. I would like to know what age and what sex might be most acceptable to my resident adult cat?*

Although it is generally accepted that related cats make the most compatible housemates, there is a distinct lack of information about the relative compatibility of unrelated cats. Therefore, it is difficult to give guidance. One piece of research carried out in Switzerland did show that adult cats are more likely to accept the introduction of a younger individual than one of the same age or older, so it would
probably be sensible to think about a kitten or a young adult for the new addition to your family. If you do need to take on an adult cat, the same research suggested that an adult of the opposite sex was more likely to be accepted and that, in cases of same-sex pairs, two males were slightly more likely to be compatible than two females.

I have just taken on a second cat and I want to maximise the chance of successful integration. What should I do?
Cats are territorial animals and when you are introducing a second feline you need to remember that they need to establish their own space within the home. It might be best therefore to provide the new cat with a separate housing area and slowly integrate the cats during times when they are likely to be occupied, distracted or enjoying themselves (such as feeding, play or treat times). Key resources such as food, shelter and social interaction need to be available in sufficient amounts to ensure that there is no unnecessary conflict. It is sensible to space these resources around the home to minimise the need to share them directly. Increasing the amount of available space within the home can be achieved by making use of three dimensional features of the house by adding furniture, shelving and aerobic centres which allow the cats to make use of vertical as well as horizontal space. If problems arise, an extended period of separation followed by a very gradual re-introduction, perhaps accompanied by the use of pheromones and/or drugs, might need to be considered. Further advice is contained in the handout entitled “Introducing a New Cat to the Household”

Is it cruel to keep a cat as a single pet?
Although cats are social creatures, they are ultimately solitary survivors. As a result, we assume they have no fundamental need for social company. This means that cats can live alone perfectly happily, and, provided that they have sufficient supply of safe territory, food, shelter and affection from their owners, they will survive very well. This does not mean that they would not benefit from the presence of another cat, especially a littermate or other relative, but it does mean that cats who are used to living alone are not likely to be suffering as a result.

This client information sheet is based on material written by Debra Horwitz, DVM, Diplomate ACVB & Gary Landsberg, DVM, Diplomate ACVB
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