



BIG ROCK
VETERINARY HOSPITAL

A HELPFUL GUIDE TO RAISING YOUR CAT or KITTEN





LEARNING MORE ABOUT CAT CARRIERS

Providing good health care, especially preventive health care, can allow your cats to have longer, more comfortable lives. However, this cannot happen unless they see the veterinarian for needed care. Many cats dislike going to the veterinarian, and that starts with the difficulty of getting the cat into the carrier. If we can make this step easier, the entire veterinary visit is usually less stressful.

The visit to the veterinarian is often difficult because the carrier, car, and the veterinary hospital are usually unfamiliar.

HELPING YOUR CAT BECOME COMFORTABLE WITH THE CARRIER

Make the carrier a familiar place at home by leaving it in a room where your cat spends a lot of time.

- Place familiar soft bedding inside the carrier. Bedding or clothing with your scent can make them feel more secure.
- Place treats, catnip or toys inside the carrier to encourage the cat to enter at home.
- It may take days or weeks before your cat starts to trust the carrier. Remain calm, patient and reward desired behaviors.



WHAT TYPE OF CARRIERS ARE BEST?

The best carriers are inexpensive hardsided carriers that open from the top and the front, and can also be taken apart in the middle. Avoid carriers that require a cat to be pulled from or dumped out for an exam. Choose carriers that are sturdy, secure and stable for the cat, as well as easy for you to carry.



Source: <https://catvets.com/public/PDFs/ClientBrochures/Cat-to-Vet-Handout-Web-Ready.pdf>

MEETING THE NEEDS *of* YOUR CAT



Addressing your cat's physical and emotional needs enhances its health and quality of life.

PROVIDE A SAFE PLACE.

Every cat needs a safe and secure place where it can retreat to so that it feels protected or which can be used as a resting area. The cat should have the ability to exit and enter the space from at least two sides if it feels threatened. Good examples of safe places are a cardboard box, a cat carrier, and a raised cat perch. Safe places should be located away from each other, so that cats can choose to be on their own.

PROVIDE MULTIPLE AND SEPARATED KEY ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES.

Key resources include food, water, toileting areas, scratching areas, play areas, and resting or sleeping areas. These resources should be separated from each other so that cats have free access without being challenged by other cats or other potential threats.

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY FOR PLAY AND PREDATORY BEHAVIOR.

Play and predatory behaviors allow cats to fulfill their natural need to hunt. Play can be stimulated with the use of interactive toys that mimic prey, such as a toy mouse that is pulled across a floor or feathers on a wand that is waved through the air. You can encourage your cat's interactive play by rotating your cat's toys so they do not get bored and rewarding with treats to provide positive reinforcement for appropriate play. If you have more than one cat, remember to play with them individually.

PROVIDE POSITIVE, CONSISTENT, AND PREDICTABLE HUMAN-CAT SOCIAL INTERACTION.

Cats' individual preferences determine how much they like human interactions such as petting, grooming, being played with or talked to, being picked up, and sitting or lying on a person's lap. Remember to remind guests and all household members not to force interaction and instead let the cat initiate, choose, and control the type of human contact.

PROVIDE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT RESPECTS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CAT'S SENSE OF SMELL.

Unlike humans, cats use their sense of smell to evaluate their surroundings. Cats mark their scent by rubbing their face and body, which deposits natural pheromones to establish boundaries within which they feel safe and secure. Avoid cleaning their scent off these areas, especially when a new cat is introduced into the home or there are other changes with pets, people, or the environment of the home. The use of synthetic facial pheromones, such as Feliway®, can mimic a cat's natural pheromones and provide a calming effect in a stressful or unfamiliar situation.

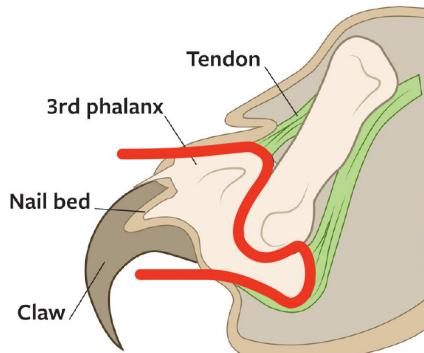


Source: <https://catvets.com/public/PDFs/ClientBrochures/Environmental%20GuidelinesEViewFinal.pdf>

ALTERNATIVES TO DECLAWING

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.'



SCRATCHING POSTS/PADS

Provide your cat with suitable 'scratches' where they can exhibit normal scratching behavior. Experiment with a variety of textures and types of scratches 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. 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 (corner of the couch). Kittens and cats can be trained to use scratches 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. The frequency of claw trimming will depend on your cat's lifestyle. If possible, start trimming as kittens so they become comfortable with the process early on. 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 scratches, and environmental enrichment.

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.

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.



HOW TO FEED A CAT

ADDRESSING BEHAVIORAL NEEDS



CURRENT FEEDING METHODS

PUZZLE FEEDERS AND HUNTING PUZZLE FEEDERS

Food Puzzles are objects that hold food and must be handled by the cat to get the food out. Using puzzle feeders and even hiding kibbles around the home increases activity, and provides mental and physical stimulation. Always start with simple puzzle feeders first because your cat needs to learn how to use them. As your cat gets comfortable with using them, you can slowly make them more difficult. For more information on puzzle feeders, visit www.catfriendly.com/howtofeedcats.

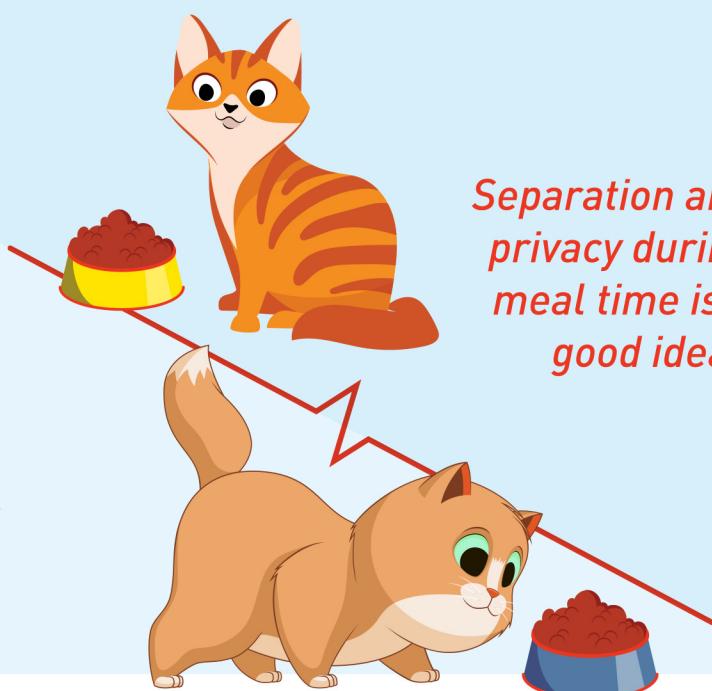
FREQUENT MEALS AND APPROPRIATE NUTRITION

Divide your cat's daily food allowance into multiple small meals fed throughout the 24-hour period. Use puzzle feeders when possible. Automatic feeders can also be helpful although they do not typically provide for hunting or foraging. Food needs to be located where your cat can reach it.

SEPARATE RESOURCES FOR HOMES WITH MULTIPLE CATS

In multiple pet households, offer separate feeding stations with distance and visual separation between cats, as well as utilize elevated space, to reduce stress and associated health issues.

Make sure each cat has their own food and water bowl. These should be in a separate location for each cat. Some cats that are able to jump may prefer to eat on counters or other elevated spaces. It may be helpful to put food and water bowls where each cat spends most of their time, but not close to litter boxes. Meals can be offered through programmable feeding bowls; some utilize individual microchips, only allowing one cat to access the bowl. Cats need to hunt and search for food, and to eat multiple small meals each day in privacy. You can meet these needs with puzzle feeders and by portioning food throughout the day, which reduces inactivity, anxiety, and obesity.



INTRODUCING A CAT

When you already have cats as part of your family, introducing your newly adopted cat can seem like an overwhelming task. Patience is key—the transition can take several weeks, but by planning ahead you can reduce some stress, allow for an easier transition, and build a positive relationship between your feline companions.



STEP ONE – THE FIRST FEW DAYS

- You should isolate your new cat in a separate room with his own food, water, litter box, bedding, and toys.
- Bring familiar items from the adoption location into the separate room in order to make this room smell comforting and “homey” to your new kitty.
- If there are other cats in your home, this first step allows both cats to first get used to the scent and sounds of the other cat without risk of confrontation.
- Be sure to spend a lot of time with each cat or group of cats individually.
- Keep his cat carrier open in the room as well so your cat has a place to hide and can become familiar with the carrier for future veterinary visits. When you allow your cat to become familiar with his carrier, it can help reduce the stress and difficulty of getting your cat into the carrier when you need to transport them to the veterinarian’s office or on a trip.



STEP TWO

- Once all your cats in the home seem relaxed, gradually start to move the food dishes closer to the door that separates them. If any stress is noted, go back to the step where they were comfortable and work more slowly.
- You can also use a toy for them to play with under the door when they are calm and hopefully curious.
- If your cats are calm, take a cloth/blanket to wipe one cat and then put that cloth in the room with the other cats. Do the same for new and existing cats, so that the others can smell the cat in their area.
- If this is comfortable to all cats, you can also mix the scents on one cloth, wiping first one cat, then the other.
- Remember to reward all calm behaviors with treats and praise in a soft voice.
- When your cats are comfortable with the steps above, it is time to try a brief and safe interaction. This can be done by opening the crack of the door an inch so that both cats are safe, but can start to see each other.
- If one cat hisses or tries to attack, close the door, back up the process, and restart more gradually.
- Sometimes it can be helpful to distract your cats with food.

INTRODUCING A CAT

(CONTINUED)

STEP THREE

- When all is going well, place your new cat inside a carrier and allow your other cat(s) to explore by seeing and smelling your new cat more closely in a safe environment.
- Continue to reward calm behaviors with treats and praise in a soft voice.
- If your cats are harness and leash trained, this is another option you can try.



STEP FOUR

- If your cats seem comfortable in this environment, the next step is to try placing them in the same room with direct supervision.
- Start introductions for brief periods to help make it more likely that these experiences will be positive.
- Remember to be patient and go back a few steps if necessary, and gradually re-introduce.
- If you have any concerns, contact your veterinarian.
- Once your cats have been successfully acclimated, remember that each cat still needs their own resources, often in different locations, such as food, water, bedding, and litter boxes.

A FEW FINAL PIECES OF IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- It can still be overwhelming to acclimate a cat into your home even if you do not have other cats.
- As your new feline companion becomes more comfortable, he will be more likely to explore and test the boundaries.
- You should always check for potential hazards in your home such as poisonous plants, full-length curtains, fireplaces, breakable objects, etc.
- The more prepared you are, the smoother the transition can be.



PARASITE PREVENTION

Parasites fall into two general categories, internal and external. Some of the most common types of parasites are fleas, mites, ticks, roundworms, tapeworms, and heartworms.

Talk to your vet about which parasite prevention is the best fit for your new family member!



COMMON EXTERNAL FELINE PARASITES

FLEAS



Cause skin disease but may transmit other serious infections, such as tapeworm and bacterial infections.

TICKS



Cause skin irritation for your cat, but can also carry serious diseases that threaten your cat's health.

MITES



Cause significant irritation and pain. Often times leads to different bacterial infections.

An annual parasite control plan for both external and internal parasites not only protects your cat, but you and your family members as well. Your veterinarian will work with you to determine the best approach for your cat based on lifestyle and location.

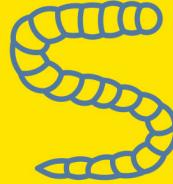
COMMON INTERNAL FELINE PARASITES

HEARTWORM



It's a lung disease despite its name and often carried by mosquitoes. Since these insects will come into homes, even indoor cats are at risk.

TAPEWORM



Can be acquired via fleas or mice. All kittens should be treated for tapeworm at least once. Adults are treated based on lifestyle factors.

ROUNDWORM



Common in kittens and young adult cats, and even indoor cats are at risk. Kittens commonly acquire roundworms from their mother.

In order to keep your cat as healthy as possible, it's helpful to have general knowledge about potential health dangers, and ways to prevent your cat from becoming sick, unnecessarily. Parasite prevention is vital in keeping your cat healthy.



FELINE VACCINATIONS

RABIES

This deadly viral infection most commonly spreads through bite wounds, but can also be transmitted to any mammal by exposure of an open wound to the saliva of an infected animal. Skunks, raccoons, coyotes, foxes, and bats are the most common wild carriers in North America. Humans are at risk of infection if bitten by an infected animal or if the saliva of an infected animal comes into contact with an open wound. Rabies is routinely fatal once symptoms develop.

FELINE LEUKEMIA VIRUS (FeLV)

The leading cause of virus-associated deaths in cats, FeLV spreads through the saliva, nasal secretions, feces, urine, and milk of infected cats. Casual contact, bite wounds, and nursing can all transmit the infection. Roughly 50 percent of cats diagnosed with FeLV succumb to the disease within two and a half years. Infected cats may suffer from anemia, immune suppression, and cancer. All kittens should be vaccinated against FeLV during their first year of life. Afterward, any adult cat that may be exposed to outdoor cats or FeLV-infected cats should continue to receive this vaccine.



PANLEUKOPENIA (FELINE DISTEMPER)

This highly contagious and potentially lethal virus causes fever, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, and in some cases, sudden death. Kittens are particularly susceptible.

FELINE HERPESVIRUS (VIRAL RHINOTRACHEITIS)

This virus causes upper respiratory infection with fever, sneezing, eye and nasal discharge, conjunctivitis (inflammation of the inner eyelids and mucous membranes around the eyes), inflammation of the cornea (keratitis), and lethargy. Kittens have an increased risk of infection.

CALICIVIRUS

This highly contagious and ubiquitous virus is one of the major causes of upper respiratory infection in cats. Affected cats may experience sneezing, eye and nasal discharge, conjunctivitis, lethargy, loss of appetite, sores on the gums and soft tissues of the oral cavity, and lameness. In some cases, affected kittens may develop pneumonia. In rare cases, a much more virulent strain of this virus can cause inflammation of the liver, intestines, pancreas, and cells that line the blood vessels. This severe form of calicivirus can be deadly in up to half of affected cats.





FeLV & FIV

It is important to test your cat for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) and Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) because these viruses can cause many types of illnesses and ultimately death in infected cats. These viruses are specific to cats, as they do not affect humans or other pets.

WHAT IS FELINE LEUKEMIA

FELINE LEUKEMIA VIRUS (FeLV)

This infection is more commonly spread among cats that live together. The virus can also be spread from mother to kittens, and among cats that fight. It is mainly spread through saliva when cats groom each other, and when food and water bowls are shared. In North America, about 4% of tested cats are found to be infected with FeLV. In Latin America, 42% of tested cats are found to be infected.

Signs of Infection:

When first exposed to FeLV, a cat might not show any signs of illness. Some cats that are exposed can clear the virus completely from their body. Other cats able to control the infection, preventing illness. In some cats, the infection will become active in their body, and they will develop problems such as low red blood cells (anemia) or cancer. These problems can be severe and even fatal to your pet.

WHAT IS FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS

FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (FIV)

FIV is more commonly found in male cats that are not neutered and in cats that fight other cats. It is found less often in kittens and neutered adult cats. The virus is spread through saliva and usually transmitted through bite wounds. In North America, about 3 – 5% of tested cats are found to be infected with FIV. In Latin America, up to 25% of tested cats are found to be infected.

Signs of Infection:

Newly infected cats may show mild illness, with fever or a decrease in appetite. After the early days of infection, the cat will return to normal and may not appear sick again for months or years. These cats can still infect other cats. Later in life, the cat's infection may become active again, and the cat will show signs of sickness. When the virus is active, it can weaken the immune system, leaving the cat at risk for different infections.

VACCINATION SCHEDULE

Weeks Old

DUE DATE

DATE COMPLETED

Weeks Old

DUE DATE

DATE COMPLETED

Weeks Old

DUE DATE

DATE COMPLETED

Weeks Old

DUE DATE

DATE COMPLETED

PET INSURANCE

There are many pet insurance companies out there. We recommend researching your options to see if this is beneficial for you and your pet. Please ask your vet about specific recommendations based on your pet's individual needs.



POISON INFO

PET POISONS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT



FOOD OR ADDITIVES

- Chocolate (Most Common)
- Raisins & Grapes
- Xylitol (Sugar free gums and candy)
- Onions
- Garlic
- Coffee
- Macadamia Nuts



MISCELLANEOUS

- Ethylene glycol
- Illegal Drugs
- Lead Poisoning
- Rat Poison



POISONOUS PLANTS

- Azaleas
- Lilies
- Oleander
- Tulips



PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

- NSAID (Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, most common)
- Acetaminophen