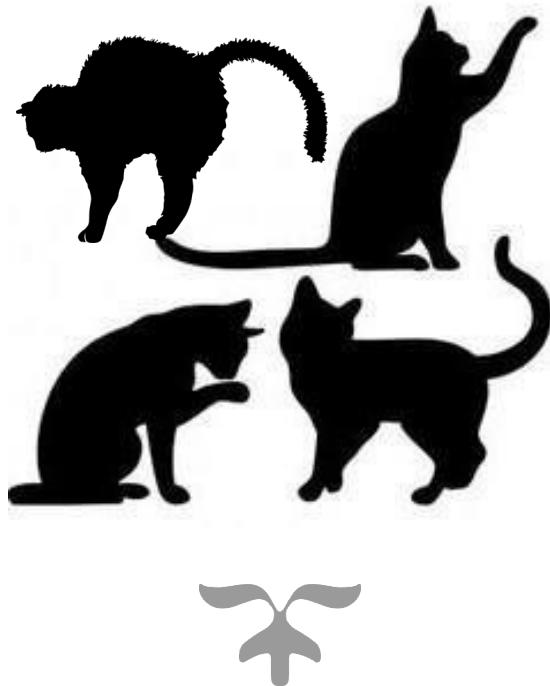


# A CAT CARE MANUAL AND RESOURCE GUIDE



A Collection of Advice  
from Around the Country

Pura Pride Preserve Inc. (Pura Pride) is a 501(c)3 pet welfare non-profit that provides support to pet owners, animal welfare organizations, breeders, and veterinarians. A *Cat Care Manual and Resource Guide* is meant to provide pet owners, whether novice or pro, resources to better care for your cat. To continue to provide education and animal welfare support, please consider making a small monthly donation at <https://purapride.org> or to one of the fine non-profits and universities listed in this manual. Thank you!



## A Cat Care Manual and Resource Guide

We hope that your cat will bring you years of joy! We have included some information that should help you toward this goal. One of the most important relationships of a cat owner is with your veterinarian. It is important to have one who stays current with the latest developments and who is a cat expert.

In the event you do not have a regular vet, we have provided you with information on how to choose a vet. You will also find information about local emergency animal centers, information on handling common (though not always appreciated) feline behaviors, basic tips on cat care and a list of resources should something arise that isn't covered in this manual.

If you are planning to adopt or have recently adopted a cat, please understand that while bringing this cat into your home is a wonderful thing for you, it can still be a stressful change for your kitty. We strongly urge you to give your cat several weeks to a few months to adapt to all the changes. Keep him or her in a small room, even a bathroom, for a couple of days so your kitty can get used to all the new sounds and smells, but, most importantly, to allow kitty to focus on you. This step is even more critical if you have adopted an especially shy cat or have other animals in the home. Bonding with your new cat in the first few weeks should be your primary focus. It may be tempting to show kitty off to everyone, but there will be time for that later.

Spend several twenty minutes to half-hour sessions with your new cat daily. Use this time to let your kitty know that you are the source of all things good...food, petting, and play.



Gradually introduce your cat to the rest of your home. If kitty will allow, it is best to hold him or her securely in your arms and walk slowly around your home for the first visit. If kitty is shaking, then only introduce one room at a time.

If you move too fast, you might find that your cat will hide a lot, perhaps only coming out while you are sleeping to check you out. Do not be alarmed if kitty doesn't eat much for the first day or so. Weigh kitty on the first day and keep a log for the next few months, weighing weekly. Sometimes cats develop little stress colds after moving into their new home. This is generally nothing to be alarmed about but do make sure that the cat is eating and not overly congested. Call your place of adoption and your vet if the cat does not eat for more than 2 days or seems lethargic.

If the counselor at your place of adoption (or breeder, if purchasing a pedigreed cat) is unavailable, you may call Pura Pride Preserve for concerns and questions at 303-562-6380. Whether you purchased your cat through a breeder or a shelter, they would generally like to know how kitty is doing; so be sure to stay in touch, whether it's an annual holiday card or posting photos on their Facebook pages.

We hope that you will also stay in touch with Pura Pride. At any time, you don't find useful resources on our website, shoot us an email and we will try to help you out. We know that owning a pet is fun and fabulous at times; but when kitty gets sick, you may need support in knowing what questions to ask your vet. We are here to help if we continue to receive public donations!

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# Things Your Cat Wants You To Know

## Behavior

- ❖ American Association of Feline Practitioners.  
<https://catvets.com/education/online/videos/cat-owner-video>
- ❖ Facebook group: Cats with Behavioral Issues

## Health

- ❖ <https://healthtopics.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/articles/feline> Univ. of California, Davis
- ❖ Diabetes, Urinary Tract, Gastrointestinal, etc.:  
<https://www.vet.cornell.edu/departments-centers-and-institutes/cornell-feline-health-center/health-information/feline-health-topics> Cornell Feline Health Center
- ❖ Nutrition and Feeding: <http://www.catinfo.org/>. Linda A. Pierson, DVM
- ❖ Diets: <https://www.vet.cornell.edu/departments-centers-and-institutes/cornell-feline-health-center/health-information/feline-health-topics/cornell-veterinary-experts-address-feline-nutrition>
- ❖ Elimination Diets:  
[https://www.cavd.ca/images/CAVD\\_Illustrated\\_Diet\\_Trial\\_Handout\\_for\\_Cats.pdf](https://www.cavd.ca/images/CAVD_Illustrated_Diet_Trial_Handout_for_Cats.pdf)

## Infectious Diseases

- ❖ FIP (Feline Infectious Peritonitis): <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/11/8/2257>, FIP Warriors Facebook Group
- ❖ FIP, FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus), FeLV (Feline Leukemia Virus):  
<http://www.vet.cornell.edu/fhc>  
Cornell Feline Health Center

## Kitten Care

- <http://www.kittenlady.org/kitten-care> The Kitten Lady
- <https://www.catcarecenter.com/services/cats/kitten-care> The Cat Care Center of Baton Rouge.

## Senior Care

- ❖ <https://catfriendly.com/10-ways-to-care-for-your-senior-cat/>
- <https://www.vet.cornell.edu/departments-centers-and-institutes/cornell-feline-health-center/health-information/feline-health-topics/loving-care-older-cats> Cornell Feline Health Center

## Just Plain Fun...AND Informative

- ❖ Create a web page for your cat, chat groups, more links. <http://www.catster.com>
- <https://www.meowsnpaws.com/cat-care-planner/>
- ❖ Join cat or feline specific Facebook groups.

## Important Phone Numbers in Denver, Co

Cat Care Society  
303.239.9680  
option 2

Poison Control Center—Animal  
(888) 426-4435

\*A consultation fee may be applied to your credit card\*

Avid Microchip  
(800) 336-2843

Metro Denver Cat  
(844)- 336- 2287

The Max Fund  
<https://maxfund.org/Resources>  
720-266-6081

## Links to Other Links

- <https://groups.io/g/feline-hyperthyroid>
- ❖ [www.catwellness.org/](http://www.catwellness.org/)
- ❖ [FelineAssistedFeeding+help@groups.io](mailto:FelineAssistedFeeding+help@groups.io)
- ❖ <https://www.felinevideos.vet.cornell.edu/>
- ❖ [www.littlebigcat.com](http://www.littlebigcat.com)



## Your Cat: Indoors or Out?

If you want your cat to live a long and healthy life, keep her inside.

If you allow your cat to wander around on her own, without your supervision, she is susceptible to any of the following tragedies:

- becoming hit by a car
- ingesting a deadly poison
- becoming trapped by an unhappy neighbor
- being attacked by a roaming dog, cat, or wild animal
- contracting a disease from another animal
- becoming lost and unable to find her way home
- being stolen
- encountering an adult or child with cruel intentions

Following are some of the reasons people have provided for allowing their cat to be outdoors without their supervision, along with our comments and suggestions.

### **“I have a six-foot fence.”**

Unless you have special fencing that's designed to prevent a cat from climbing out, your cat will be able to scale your fence and escape the confines of your yard. Even if you do have special fencing, you need to make sure that it can keep other cats or animals from getting into your yard to get to your cat.

### **“My last cat went outdoors and he loved it.”**

Your cat may enjoy being outdoors, but by allowing him to go outside, unsupervised, you're putting him at risk and shortening his life span. Most cats that are allowed to roam outdoors usually don't live for more than a few years. Cats who live strictly indoors can live up to 18 - 20 years of age.

### **“My cat's litter box smells.”**

Scoop your cat's litter box daily. How often you change the litter depends on the number of cats in your home, the number of litter boxes, and the type of litter you use. Twice a week is a general guideline for clay litter, but depending on the circumstances, you may need to change it every other day or once a week. Wash the litter box with soap and water every time you change the litter. Don't use strong smelling chemicals or cleaning products when washing the litter box, as it may cause your cat to avoid it.

### **“My cat likes to sun herself.”**

Your cat can sun herself by any window indoors. If you're really set on letting your cat sun herself outdoors, put her on a harness and leash and stay with her while she's taking in the rays.

### **“I can't keep him in.”**

Keep your windows closed or put in screens. Remember to always keep your doors closed and teach your children the importance of keeping the doors closed, too. It may take a few days or a few weeks, but if there are enough interesting things for your cat to play with indoors, he'll come to enjoy being indoors. Be sure to provide him with a scratching post and safe toys to bat or carry around (see our handout: “Cat Toys and How To Use Them”).

### **“We've always let her out.”**

You can change your cat's behavior. It will take time and patience, but it might save her life. When you implement your “closed door” policy, give her a lot of extra attention and entertainment. At first she may cry, but don't give in. Soon she'll be happy to stay indoors with you.

### **“My cat knows to avoid cars.”**

Even if this were true, all it would take is another cat, a dog, or shiny object to lure your cat into the street and into the path of traffic. Also keep in mind that some people may not swerve to miss a cat in the road.

### **“My cat needs exercise and likes to play with other cats.”**

Stray cats are likely to spread viruses like feline leukemia and other fatal diseases. If your cat needs a friend, adopt another cat that's healthy and disease-free.

### **“My cat yowls and acts like he really needs to go outside.”**

Your cat may be feeling the physiological need to mate. If this is the case, make sure your cat is neutered (males) or spayed (females). Sterilized cats don't have the natural need to breed, and therefore, won't be anxious to go out to find a mate.

**Credit and thanks to ddfl.org.**



## Why Kittens & Young Cats Should Be Adopted In Pairs

Kittens are curious and crave constant stimulation. A single, bored kitten will often entertain itself by chewing on plants, climbing drapes, climbing furniture, unrolling toilet paper, exploring electrical cords and sockets, etc. This is not to say that kittens who live with other kittens will not also sometimes do these things, but if they have another kitten to tumble around and play with, it is less likely that they will need to entertain themselves with behaviors like these, which at the least are destructive and at the worst can be very dangerous.

Kittens tend to be very active at night. A single kitten is likely to keep the owner awake with constant jumping, pouncing and other hunting behavior directed at any portion of the owner's body, which moves under the bed linens. With a companion to play with after the owner has gone to bed, this behavior is minimized as the two will occupy each other by finding interesting shadows to chase and games to play until they finally tire and fall asleep too.

Kittens want and need interaction with others of their own kind for healthy social development. A kitten learns a lot in the first several months of life from its mother and littermates. Kittens that can remain with one of their littermates or a similarly aged companion, tend to be healthier and happier, and in the end, better socialized pets than those who are isolated from others of their kind at an early age.



Anyone who has observed kittens know they want to bite and wrestle with one another--this behavior is normal. You cannot prevent a kitten from doing what comes naturally any more than you can force a two-year-old toddler to sit still. Though it is not acceptable for a kitten to bite and wrestle with its human companions, in the absence of having a littermate or companion its own age to play with, this is precisely what a single kitten will want to do. Even if you are willing to allow (and can tolerate) this behavior from your kitten when it is small, by the time the animal matures, you will end up with an adult cat who has developed very bad habits (i.e., biting & scratching as "play").

Humans, even loving, caring humans, are not an adequate substitute for a cat in lieu of one of its own kind. Even if the owner is fortunate enough to be home quite a bit, the amount of attention a lone kitten will demand is likely to occupy all the owner's waking hours at home. A pair of kittens will still want to interact with the owner, but can keep each other occupied while the owner is doing such necessary tasks as working, paying bills, having telephone conversations, gardening, laundry, etc. Most cats, regardless of their age, are highly sociable and are truly happier living with other cat companions. This in turn makes them better pets, which results in happier owners.

Particularly if there is already an older cat in the household, a kitten should not be brought in as a lone companion. As mentioned above, a youngster has boundless energy, wants to play and run constantly, and requires very high amounts of interaction, all of which are likely to overwhelm and irritate an older cat in short order. Likewise, a kitten is apt to be frustrated that its companion does not have the same energy level as itself. At the very least, this can lead to two very unhappy cats. Worse-case scenario, behavior problems such as litter box avoidance or destructive scratching can occur if one or both cats act out their frustrations on their surroundings. Longer-term, it is almost certain that the two will never have a close, bonded relationship, even after the kitten matures, since their experiences with one another from the beginning of the relationship are likely to be negative. An older cat is better matched with someone of his or her own age, who has a similar temperament.



Adopting a single kitten or young cat is simply not a good idea. Trying to keep a single kitten occupied, stimulated, safe, and happy while also going about the business of everyday life is much more of a challenge than it may seem upon first consideration.

**Credit and thanks to [pawschicago.org](http://pawschicago.org).**

# How to Cat-Proof Your Home

## Protect Valuables

Cats are curious. That is one of their main jobs – being curious. So, you won't want to leave your Ming Dynasty antique vase sitting on the coffee table, because about ten seconds into Kitty's first exploration of the house, she will spring up on the table and topple the Ming Dynasty. Vase, that is.

### ❖ Breakables

Put away any breakable treasures that are remotely accessible to your cat. Jumping up onto high places (like shelves and counters) is innate cat behavior; trying to stop it will be stressful for both you and Kitty. Instead, put yourself into the mind of the cat, look around, and remove anything you value.

### ❖ Other Destructibles

Kittens will climb your furniture and drapes. Consider covering cloth furniture with a purchased cover, or even with a blanket or bedspread. Confine drapes to off-limit rooms.

## Poisonous Plants

Kittens and adult cats love to play with plants—the motion of leaves moving in a draft is irresistible. Unfortunately, part of their play involves biting and tasting—eating some plants can be fatal; so, get rid of those, or hang them safely out of reach. For a comprehensive list of plants poisonous to pets, read the "Poisonous Plants" article in this manual.

## The Garage

It's best just to make the garage off-limits to your cat. Too many poisonous/hazardous materials are stored there. Anti-freeze is the worst because pets are attracted by its taste. Clean up *all* spilled anti-freeze pronto.

## Other Hazards

### ❖ Hanging blinds cords

Kittens will love to bat around cords from hanging blinds but can also get tangled up in them with disastrous consequences. The safest bet is to tie the cords up out of reach.

### ❖ Electrical and phone cords

Kittens' insatiable curiosity often leads them to one of the most dangerously tempting objects in the house: electric cords. Invest in a cord management system or tape the cords together and fasten them out of reach. Do the same with long phone cords.

### ❖ Pest Poisons

Remove any ant or roach traps from accessible areas.

### ❖ Small Hazards

Rubber bands, paperclips, thumbtacks, broken balloons, Christmas tree tinsel, and other small articles are tempting play objects for cats but pose a choking hazard. Put them away in containers and leave the tinsel off the tree this year. Keep plastic bags and bags with small handles out of reach of your cat.

## The Safe Room

Set aside a "safe room" for your new arrival. Put her food dish, water, litter box, toys, scratching post and bed in it. Give this room a thorough going over. Once kitty is comfortable in her new surroundings, it will be time to let her explore the rest of your happily cat-proofed home.

**Credit and thanks to Franny Syufy for [cats.about.com](http://cats.about.com).**

## A Kitten Proof Home

Kittens are curious creatures capable of jumping onto high surfaces or squeezing into the smallest of spaces. To protect your kitten in his/her new environment and to safeguard your belongings, consider kitten proofing your house. It is easy - here's how:

### **Kitchens/Bathrooms:**

- ❖ Use childproof latches to keep little paws from prying open cabinets.
- ❖ Keep medications, cleaners, chemicals, and laundry supplies on high shelves.
- ❖ Keep trash cans either covered or inside a latched cabinet.
- ❖ Make sure the kitten hasn't jumped into the dryer before you turn it on.
- ❖ Keep all foods out of reach (even if the food isn't harmful, the wrapper could be.)
- ❖ Store all plastic (grocery/store) bags out of reach for the kitten (they are covered with the stearic acid in animal fat, so kittens like to lick/suck on them or may get their head stuck in the handle.)

### **Living Room/Family Room:**

- ❖ Place dangling wires from lamps, VCR's, televisions, stereos, and phones out of reach.
- ❖ Keep kids toys put away.
- ❖ Put away knick-knacks until your kitten has the coordination not to knock them over.
- ❖ Check all of the places where your vacuum cleaner doesn't fit, but your kitten does, for dangerous items, like string.
- ❖ Move houseplants - which can be poisonous – out of reach, including hanging plants that can be jumped onto from nearby surfaces.
- ❖ Tie hanging blinds up and out of reach.
- ❖ Remove all small hazards such as rubber bands, paperclips, thumbtacks, and broken balloons as they pose a choking hazards.

### **Bedrooms:**

- ❖ Keep laundry and shoes behind closed doors: drawstrings and buttons can cause major problems.
- ❖ Keep all medications, lotions, or cosmetics off accessible surfaces (like the bedside table).
- ❖ Move electrical and phone wires out of reach of chewing.

**Credit and thanks to [americanhumane.org](http://americanhumane.org).**



## Plants, Foods, and Substances Dangerous to Your Pet

Pets are naturally inquisitive and will investigate things that are sometimes harmful to them. It is the responsibility of pet owners to create a safe environment for their furry counterparts. Below are three lists from the ASPCA ([www.aspca.org](http://www.aspca.org)) of plants, foods, and other common substances that are potentially toxic to pets, most specifically to cats and dogs.

Many of the plants in the following list are very common in households. Great care should be taken to keep these plants out of reach of your pets.

### Ten Most Common Poisonous Plants

**Marijuana:** Ingestion of *Cannabis sativa* by companion animals can result in depression of the central nervous system and incoordination, as well as vomiting, diarrhea, drooling, increased heart rate, and even seizures and coma.

**Sago Palm:** All parts of *Cycas Revoluta* are poisonous, but the seeds or “nuts” contain the largest amount of toxin. The ingestion of just one or two seeds can result in very serious effects, which include vomiting, diarrhea, depression, seizures and liver failure.

**Lilies:** Members of the *Lilium spp.* are considered to be highly toxic to cats. While the poisonous component has not yet been identified, it is clear that with even ingestions of very small amounts of the plant, severe kidney damage could result.

**Tulip/Narcissus bulbs:** The bulb portions of *Tulipa/Narcissus spp.* contain toxins that can cause intense gastrointestinal irritation, drooling, loss of appetite, depression of the central nervous system, convulsions and cardiac abnormalities.

**Azalea/Rhododendron:** Members of the *Rhododenron spp.* contain substances known as grayanotoxins which can produce vomiting, drooling, diarrhea, weakness and depression of the central nervous system in animals. Severe azalea poisoning could ultimately lead to coma and death from cardiovascular collapse.

**Oleander:** All parts of *Nerium oleander* are toxic, as they contain cardiac glycosides that have the potential to cause serious effects—including gastrointestinal tract irritation, abnormal heart function, hypothermia and even death.

**Castor Bean:** The poisonous principle in *Ricinus communis* is ricin, a highly toxic protein that can produce severe abdominal pain, drooling, vomiting, diarrhea, excessive thirst, weakness, and loss of appetite. Severe cases of poisoning can result in dehydration, muscle twitching, tremors, seizures, coma, and death.

**Cyclamen:** *Cylamen* species contain cyclamine, but the highest concentration of this toxic component is typically located in the root portion of the plant. If consumed, Cylamen can produce significant gastrointestinal irritation, including intense vomiting. Fatalities have also been reported in some cases.

**Kalanchoe:** This plant contains components that can produce gastrointestinal irritation, as well as those that are toxic to the heart, and can seriously affect cardiac rhythm and rate.

**Yew:** *Taxus spp.* contains a toxic component known as taxine which causes central nervous system effects, such as trembling, incoordination, and difficulty breathing. It can also cause significant gastrointestinal irritation and cardiac failure, which can result in death.

**Credit and thanks to aspca.org.**

## Toxic Plants Listed Alphabetically

This list contains plants that have been reported as having systemic effects on animals and/or intense effects on the gastrointestinal tract. Please note this list is not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather a compilation of the most frequently encountered plants. *Credit and thanks to aspca.org.*

- Aloe
- Amaryllis
- Andromeda Japonica
- Asian Lily(Liliaceae)
- Asparagus Fern
- Australian Nut
- Autumn Crocus
- Avocado
- Azalea
- Bird of Paradise
- American Bittersweet
- European Bittersweet
- Branching Ivy
- Buckeye
- Buddist Pine
- Caladium
- Calla Lily
- Castor Bean
- Ceriman (aka Cutleaf Philodendron)
- Charming Diffenbachia
- Chinaberry Tree
- Chinese Evergreen
- Christmas Rose
- Clematis
- Cordatum
- Corn Plant (aka Cornstalk Plant)
- Cutleaf Philodendron(aka Ceriman)
- Cycads
- Cyclamen
- Daffodil
- Day Lily
- Devil's Ivy
- Dumb Cane
- Deadly Nightshade(See Nightshade)
- Easter Lily
- Elephant Ears
- Emerald Feather(aka Emerald Fern)
- Emerald Fern(aka Emerald Feather)
- English Ivy
- Fiddle-Leaf Philodendron
- Flamingo Plant
- Florida Beauty
- Foxglove
- Fruit Salad Plant
- Glacier Ivy
- Gladiolas
- Glory Lily
- Gold Dieffenbachia
- Gold Dust Dracaena
- Golden Pothos
- Green Gold Nephthysis
- Hahn's selfbranching English Ivy
- Heartleaf Philodendron
- Heavenly Bamboo
- Holly
- Horsehead Philodendron
- Hurricane Plant
- Hyacinth
- Hydrangea
- Iris
- Japanese Show Lily
- Japanese Yew (aka Yew)
- Jerusalem Cherry
- Kalanchoe
- Lace Fern
- Lacy Tree
- Lily of the Valley
- Macadamia Nut
- Madagascar Dragon Tree
- Marble Queen
- Marijuana
- Mauna Loa Peace Lily (aka Peace Lily)
- Mexican Breadfruit
- Mistletoe "American"
- Morning Glory
- Mother-in-Law
- Narcissus
- Needlepoint Ivy
- Nephthytis
- Nightshade
- Oleander
- Onion
- Orange Day Lily
- Panda
- Peace Lily (aka Mauna Loa Peace Lily)
- Philodendron Pertusum
- Plumosa Fern
- Precatory Bean
- Queensland Nut
- Red Emerald
- Red Lily
- Red-Margined Dracaena(aka Straight-Margined Dracaena)
- Red Princess
- Rhododendron
- Ribbon Plant (Dracaenasanderiana)
- Rubrum Lily
- Saddle Leaf Philodendron
- Sago Palm
- Satin Pothos
- Schefflera Spotted Dumb Cane
- Stargazer Lily
- Striped Dracaena
- Sweetheart Ivy
- Swiss Cheese Plant
- Taro Vine
- Tiger Lily
- Tomato Plant
- Tree Philodendron
- Tropic Snow Dumbcane
- Tulip
- Variable Dieffenbachia
- Variegated Philodendron
- Warneckei Dracaena
- Wood Lily
- Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow
- Yew (aka Japanese Yew)
- Yucca

## Dangerous Foods for Your Pet

If you suspect your pet has ingested something that may be hazardous, or if your pet suddenly shows any change in behavior, appetite, or overall appearance, you should contact your veterinarian immediately. You can also contact The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at **1-888-426-4435**. For more information on The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center visit [www.apcc.aspca.org](http://www.apcc.aspca.org).

**Credit and thanks to aspca.org.**

We often think of our pets not as animals, but as people. After all, they have personalities just like we do, likes and dislikes etc. And just as their human counterparts, pets will often consume things that are not so good for them. Some people foods are not safe for your pet to eat. While we all probably know someone, who has routinely fed their pet one or more of these unhealthy and, possibly, toxic foods with no apparent adverse effects, most vets agree that you should avoid feeding the following foods to your pet. Below are foods that you should avoid feeding your dog or cat.

- Alcoholic beverages
- Avocado
- Chocolate (all forms of chocolate)
- Coffee (all forms of coffee)
- Fatty foods
- Macadamia nuts
- Moldy or spoiled foods
- Onions, onion powder
- Raisins and grapes
- Salt
- Yeast or any raw bread dough
- Garlic
- Products sweetened with xylitol (used to sweeten some sugar-free candies and gum.)

## Other Dangerous Substances to Pets

A good rule of thumb for making your house safe for your pet is to poison-proof it just as you would for a small child. Dogs, cats, ferrets, rabbits, birds, and most other animals are curious by nature. They like to explore new areas and substances. For your pet's health, as well as the health of any children in the household, please be certain all chemicals are kept out of reach. Common household cleaning products are toxic to animals as well as humans. Animals, just like children, do not recognize the danger these products pose to their health. The following is a list of common products found in most homes that are hazardous to pets.

- ❖ Outdoor plants and plant bulbs
- ❖ Swimming pool treatment supplies
- ❖ Pesticides
- ❖ Rat and mouse bait
- ❖ Fly baits containing methomyl and slug bait containing metaldehyde
- ❖ Liquid potpourris
- ❖ Ice melting products
- ❖ Batteries
- ❖ Christmas decorations, tinsel, ribbons (choking or intestinal blockage hazard)
- ❖ Christmas tree water (may contain fertilizers)
- ❖ Herbicides
- ❖ Prescription Medication
- ❖ Over the Counter Medications
- ❖ Antifreeze
- ❖ Cleaning agents
- ❖ Citronella candles
- ❖ Compost piles
- ❖ Fertilizers
- ❖ Flea products – Use feline appropriate products.



## Bringing Your New Cat Home

Congratulations! You are the proud new owner of a cat. No doubt you're looking forward to years of happy companionship. But what do you do now?

The first thing you should know about your new pet is that most cats hate to travel. After the ride home from the animal shelter, he will, most likely, not be in the mood for fun. For the trip home, confine your pet in a sturdy cat carrier. Don't leave him loose in your car where he might panic and cause an accident.

To make his transition to your household as comfortable as possible, select a quiet, closed-in area such as your bedroom or a small room away from the main foot traffic, and provide him with a litter box, food, water, scratching post, bed, and toys. Let your new pet become acquainted with that limited area for the first few days. Let him sniff all your belongings and investigate all the hiding places. Over a few days, slowly introduce him to the rest of your house, including the other pets and household members. It will take a little while, but he will eventually begin to feel at home.

Cats vary in terms of how demanding they are as pets, so let yours guide you to the level of attention he wants, whether it is your hand for petting or your lap for sitting. Provide him with the necessary creature comforts and give him the companionship he seeks, and he will be content.

The following is a mini-primer of cats' requirements for a happy life:

**Cleanliness.** Your new cat will prize a clean environment and a clean body. Cats are naturally fastidious, and most will instinctively use a litter box; for some, you may need to place the cat in the box and make little scratching motions with their front paws, so they get the idea. Many cats place such a premium on cleanliness that you should clean the box daily or several times a week. Cats also value privacy, so place the litter box in a convenient but secluded spot.



Most cats will spend hours grooming themselves, but even the most avid groomer can use a little help from time to time. Nail clipping and ear and teeth cleaning are tasks you can do to keep your cat well-groomed and healthy. Even short-haired cats benefit from weekly brushing, a task that can be pleasurable for both of you.

**Security.** Provide your cat with safety and security. Always use a cat carrier when transporting your pet. Protect him by making certain that all windows are securely screened and that the washer and dryer are kept closed and are inspected before each use. Get into the habit of ensuring that drawers, closets, and cupboards are uninhabited before you close them. And for your own security, put a collar and tag on your feline—there is always the chance he may slip outside by mistake, and you want to make sure he can be identified as your pet.



**Health Care.** Animal shelters take in animals with widely varying backgrounds, some of whom have not been previously vaccinated. Despite the best efforts of shelter workers, viruses can spread and may occasionally go home with adopted animals. If you already have dogs or cats at home, make sure they are up-to-date on their shots—including feline leukemia—and in good general health before introducing your new cat.

Take your new cat to the veterinarian within a week after adoption. The sooner the better! There, he will receive a health check and any needed vaccinations. If your cat has not been spayed or neutered, make that appointment! There are already far too many unwanted kittens and cats; do not let your new pet add to the problem. Most likely, the shelter will require that you have your pet spayed or neutered anyway. If you need more information about

why it is important to spay or neuter your cat, read our online information on spaying and neutering.



**House Rules.** Provide your cat with some "basic training" to help him get along in your home. It's true that cats usually have their own ideas about how to do things. Even so, most cats can be taught to obey simple rules like not scratching the couch, eating plants, or jumping up on the kitchen counter. With repeated, gentle, and consistent training, your cat will learn.

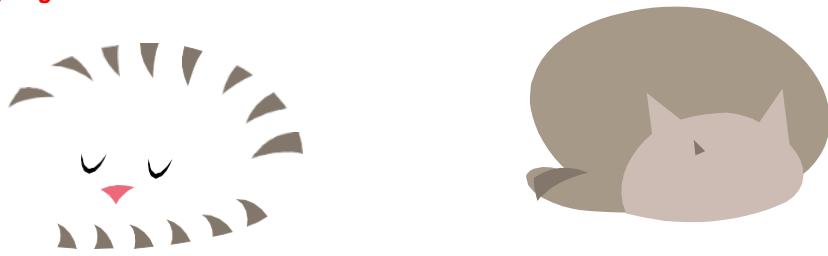
Yelling at your cat never works. Instead, positively reward him and provide him with alternative choices. A good scratching post—coupled with the handy squirt gun filled with water—can save your couch, your chair, and your nerves. If you help your cat understand the rules and give him a satisfying outlet for his scratching impulses, there will be no need to have him declawed, an unnecessary operation no cat should endure.

**Room for Fun.** Finally, provide your cat with an interesting indoor environment. Cats love to play and will appreciate simple and inexpensive toys. Ping-Pong balls and paper bags can provide hours of fun. A comfortable perch by a window can become your cat's very own entertainment and relaxation center.

Toys are very important for cats. They not only fight boredom, they also give cats a chance to express their prey-chasing drives. If you're the one moving the toy while your cat chases after it, playtime can be a bonding experience for both of you.

**Enjoy Your Rewards.** Now that you've made certain all the basic provisions are attended to, you can relax and enjoy your new pet. It may take a couple of weeks for him to adjust to life with you. But before you know it, you'll be curled up on the couch together, watching TV like old pals, and you won't remember what life was like without him.

*Credit and thanks to [humane.org](http://humane.org).*





## How to Introduce Your New Cat to Resident Cats

### "Slowly" and "Patiently" Are the Operative Words

Although sometimes cats will get along swimmingly in just a couple of hours, you should not be surprised to have a battle on your hands if you try to introduce your new cat too quickly. The time you spend on this all-important process will be saved exponentially by not having to break up conflicts every day.

#### The Steps to Take

- ❖ Set up a comfortable “safe room” for New Cat. Put her food, water, litter box (not near the food), scratching post, toys, and bed or other sleeping matthere.
- ❖ Expect a great deal of “hissy-spitty” behavior from both cats. This is natural and normal: they are just starting to explore their “pecking order.”
- ❖ Scent is very important for cats. Let each of them smell the other indirectly, by rubbing a towel on one and letting the other smell it. They will soon accept the scent as a normal part of thehouse.
- ❖ Once or twice, switch roles. Put New Cat in the normal living quarters, and let your Resident Cat sniff out the New Cat’s Safe Room.
- ❖ After a day or so, let the two cats sniff each other through a baby-gate or through a barely-opened door. Gauge the rate at which they seem to be acclimating to each other
- ❖ When you think they’re ready, let them mingle under your supervision. Ignore hissing and growling, but you may have to intervene if a physical battle breaks out. Again, take this step slowly, depending on how quickly they get along. If they do seem to tolerate each other, even begrudgingly, praise both ofthem profusely.
- ❖ Make their first activities together enjoyable ones so they will learn to associate pleasure with the presence of the other cat. Feeding (with their own separate dishes), playing, and petting. Keep up with the praise.
- ❖ If things start going badly, separate them again, and then start where you left off. If one cat seems to consistently be the aggressor, give her some “time out,” then try again a little bit later.
- ❖ The introduction can take from two hours to six months, so don’t be discouraged if your cats don’t seem to get along well at first. Often the case is that they will eventually be “bestbuddies.”

#### Factors to Consider

- ❖ If you are thinking of getting a kitten to keep an older cat company, you might want to consider two kittens. They will be able to keep each other company while the older cat learns to love them.
- ❖ If you already have more than one cat, use the “alpha cat” for preliminary introductions. Once he/she accepts the newcomer, the other Resident Cats will quickly fall in line.
- ❖ Lots of snuggle-time and attention is indicated for all cats concerned during this period. Remember, the prime goal is to get them to associate pleasure with the presence of eachother.
- ❖ If possible, ask a friend to deliver the New Cat to your home, in her cage. You can act nonchalant, as if it’s no big deal, then later let your Resident Cat(s) think it’s their idea to welcome the newcomer.
- ❖ With patience and perseverance, you can turn what might appear at first as an “armed camp” into a haven of peace for your integrated feline family. Congratulations on giving another cat in need a permanent home!

## How to Introduce Your New Cat to a Resident Dog

Follow the basic steps in ‘Introducing Your New Cat to The Resident Cats’. If you have more than one dog, introduce only one dog at a time and always with direct supervision. When finally allowing both dogs to be present with the New Cat, be aware of the dogs’ behavior to be certain that no pack hunting behavior begins, especially if your dogs have not previously been accustomed to living with cats.

Remember that many cats who like dogs and will ultimately be good buddies with a dog may exhibit defensive or even aggressive behavior upon first meeting a new dog. Often this is to establish the position of the cat that it is not a pushover and cannot be chased or intimidated by the dog.

# How to Introduce Your New Dog to a Resident Cat

Dogs and cats can usually live together peacefully, although creating a harmonious “blended family” requires some planning, patience, and careful guidance on your part. In some cases your dog and cat will become best friends. Some dogs, unfortunately, will be too dangerous for your cat, and one of the most important points of this article is that you need to recognize when this is the case.



## You will have better chance of success if:

Your dog is a puppy. A puppy who grows up with a cat is likely to see the cat as part of its social group.

## You will have less chance of success if:

Your dog has an aggressive or predatory nature. An aggressive dog can seriously injure or kill a cat, especially if your cat is a small kitten, declawed, handicapped, or elderly. A kitten can be injured by an overly playful dog. Declawed, older, or handicapped cats are less equipped to defend themselves.

## Preparation steps – important!

Get to know your dog and cat well. Be able to interpret their body language and sense their moods. Your dog should be well-trained and respond to commands to come, stay, and sit. You should also know how to blend mild discipline and positive redirection to gently influence your cat's behavior.

**Do not proceed with the introduction until you have completed the steps in this section.**

## The Introduction

Before hand, exercise your dog and feed him a nice meal to put him in a relaxed mood.

Put your dog on a short leash or in his crate.

Put your cat in her carrier if she's a scaredy-cat by nature; otherwise let her walk around. Be armed with lots of treats for good behavior.

Let your dog and cat check each other out at a distance. Pet and talk to your dog soothingly. It's not time for dog to approach cat just yet. Give your dog and cat some treats and praise as rewards.

If your dog bolts toward your cat, correct him with the leash. If he shows any signs of excessive excitability, calm him. If this doesn't do the trick, cut the visit short and try again later.

Repeat these short visits several times a day, gradually giving your dog more leash as appropriate.

**Do not move to the next phase until you have several consecutive days of incident-free visits in which both animals demonstrate to your satisfaction that they are comfortable with each other.**

## Proceed with Caution

Once your dog and cat consistently get along during leashed visits, you're ready for the next step. Take your dog off the leash and supervise the two closely. If you see problems that don't abate with a few simple voice commands, back up to the previous phase for a few days. Gradually make the no-leash sessions longer. Do *not* leave the cat and dog alone until you're absolutely sure they're both fully comfortable with each other and there will be no trouble.

Make sure your cat has places she can jump to for safety. Make some private space in your home for each animal. Use cat doors or baby gates if practical, as well as gentle discipline and rewards to enforce the rules. Keep kitty's litter box and food bowl out of your dog's reach. Now relax and give these guys some hugs.

## When it Doesn't Work Out

Sometimes, despite your best efforts, it wasn't meant to be. Some dogs are simply too dangerous to be around cats (occasionally the reverse is true). If your gut is telling you that this isn't working out, respect that message. The humane thing to do in this case is contact the shelter or breeder so that you can find a good cat-free home for the dog. In the interim, keep your dog and cat separated and give them both lots of love.

**Credit and thanks to Franny Syufy for [cats.about.com](http://cats.about.com).**

## **How to Feed: Addressing Behavioral Needs**

What we feed our cats is very important, but so is how we feed them. How we feed our cats can affect them physically and emotionally.

All cats are carnivores (meat eaters), so they have strong hunting instincts. They also prefer to eat alone and to eat multiple small meals daily.

Satisfying the need to hunt and eat small meals alone will make your cat happier and healthier and will avoid over or underfeeding. This may include using puzzle or automatic feeders, and in multiple cat homes, arranging food and water to reduce stress between your cats.

### **CURRENT FEEDING METHODS**

Your cat's environment, including feeding routine, positively or negatively impacts quality of life. Most pet cats rely on humans for food. Cats are frequently fed in one location with relatively large volumes of food once or twice a day. Many cats always have food available.

In homes with multiple cats, some cats may not get along with others. Even though cats will eat together, group feeding can cause gorging, feeding aggression, and even weight issues. Cats are very good at hiding signs of distress, so even though they may not show you clear signs of anxiety or fighting when eating together, underlying anxiety and stress affects their wellbeing.

#### **Obesity-related problems:**

Feeding one or two large meals does not meet a cat's need to eat many small meals. This approach to feeding can lead to inactivity, stress, overeating, and obesity.

If a cat is bored, eating can become an activity, leading to obesity. Overweight cats have more difficulty performing physical activities such as jumping, climbing, hunting, and playing. Obesity can also lead to health problems such as diabetes, arthritis, high blood pressure, and heart and respiratory disease.

#### **Stress related problems:**

Stress can lead to medical issues such as cystitis (bladder inflammation), and can contribute to litter box issues.

A cat may eat too quickly in order to return to their safe space if they are trying to avoid a stressful encounter with another pet or a household member such as an active toddler.

If a cat is not able to access food regularly because of the possibility of a stressful encounter with another pet or child, they may eat too little or overeat.

## **DEVELOP FEEDING SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR CAT**

When creating feeding plans, mimic the cat's natural feeding behavior. This reduces begging for food, feline frustration, and inter-cat conflict.

#### **Puzzle Feeders and Hunting**

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. There are many types of puzzle feeders you can buy or easily make at home. Puzzle feeders vary in their complexity, can be motionless or rolling, and can be designed for dry or wet foods. 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. Encourage your cat to hunt and forage for food by placing kibbles and treats in different locations. Be patient and slowly incorporate new feeding methods.

## **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.

Make sure your cat is actually eating an appropriate amount, especially if you have more than one cat. Contact your veterinarian to discuss how many calories your cat should eat. Food needs to be located where your cat can reach it.

If your cat is over or under eating or if you are having trouble feeding one or multiple cats in your home, please contact your veterinarian for advice. Weight and body condition need to be monitored by you and your veterinarian regularly, especially in cats that are older, have chronic illnesses or conditions, or special needs.

## **SEPARATE RESOURCES FOR HOMES WITH MULTIPLE CATS**

Remember, just because cats will eat together does not mean they should. Forcing a cat to eat in proximity to another cat that they otherwise try to avoid often creates anxiety, stress, and health problems.

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.

First:

Determine the household group dynamics to best locate food and water stations (as well as litter boxes). Ask yourself these questions: Which cats spend time together? Which cats avoid each other? Where does each cat spend their time? Place food, water, and litter boxes accordingly.

Next:

- ❖ Watch for signs of anxiety or tension during feeding time. Cats need to feel safe when eating. When cats are anxious or tense, you may see vigilant behavior including constant looking around, approaching the food with caution, ear flattening or positioned sideways in 'airplane' position, or a hunched or crouched posture.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Make sure that one cat does not 'guard' or 'commandeer' the food.
- ❖ Place food with a visual separation so cats cannot see one another.
- ❖ 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 in order to reduce inactivity, anxiety, and obesity. Your veterinarian can help you develop a feeding strategy to meet your cat(s)' individual needs and an overall plan that works in your household. 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 how to feed a cat, visit [www.catfriendly.com/howtofeedcats](http://www.catfriendly.com/howtofeedcats).*

***Credit and thanks to catfriendly.com.***

# Cat Food: What to Feed & What to Avoid

You Are What You Eat. So Are Your Cats.



Our experience is that much illness can be prevented and/or healed with proper feline nutrition. This is not a substitute for proper medical care but a partner in your cat's health.

Cats are obligate carnivores. This means they must have meat to survive, unlike the omnivorous dog, who can survive on a wider variety of food.

Another difference is that cats have a relatively short digestive tract with a smaller stomach, compared to dogs (and humans). Cats' livers are also lighter and much simpler than dogs, having evolved for lots of travel while hunting. Because they lack essential enzymes and amino acids, they simply don't have the capacity to digest other food sources, like vegetable matter or fruit.

Your cat's health depends on eating feline-appropriate ingredients in its food. The ideal diet for a cat is a mouse, which has around 55% protein and 23% fat. While there are [sources for whole frozen mice](#) to feed your cat, most people aren't up to that task and rely on commercial or homemade cat food. It's also just as important that your cat not be exposed to cat-inappropriate ingredients that may be toxic for it in the long run.

There is no consensus, either in the veterinary world or the pet consumer world, on whether to feed wet food, dry food, or homemade food. This is a choice best left to you and your lifestyle as your cat's guardian.

As the 2007 pet food recalls showed us, even the most premium pet food brands have been known to put questionable ingredients in their food. It's up to us to become well-informed consumers and choose the best food to keep our cats and kittens healthy.

We've drawn on the best research we can find for this article. We offer some parameters for what to look for in your cat's food and what to avoid. Please see our article [What Should I Feed My Cat](#) for more specific recommendations. Feel free to contact us if you have any other information regarding any of these ingredients. We're always open for new information!

## PROTEIN

According to the AAFCO, adult cats can survive on 26% protein, while kittens and lactating queens need 30%. However, a mouse is around 55% protein, so a higher protein content will enable them to thrive, not just survive.

While the AAFCO definition of "by-product" can contain good ingredients such clean internal organs, pet food manufacturers are also allowed to include everything from sick slaughterhouse animals to euthanized animals to

expired junk food. Since there is no consistency to the mix, it's best to avoid this source.

Look for whole sources of protein, like whole chicken, turkey, eggs or fish. The best sources are from animals the cat could conceivably kill, with amino acid ratios appropriate to feline kidneys. This means chickens, turkeys and other small birds with occasional eggs and fish. "Meal" means the fat and water of the protein have been removed and is usually a satisfactory source of protein since it's more concentrated, but make sure the animal is specified.

### **What to avoid**

- Any non-specific meat: especially by-products which can contain any form of animal matter (i.e., skin, fur, organs, etc.) and residual matter from processing which are unhealthy choices.
- Meat by-products: especially as the initial meat ingredient, avoid to ensure good long term health.

### **FAT**

While the AAFCO puts minimum fat needs at 9%, a mouse would be around 23%. 15% fat is a good compromise. The fat source should be from a specific animal.

### **What to avoid**

- Beef tallow: a cheap and indigestible fat source for cats
- "Animal fat": the fat from rendering questionable sources of protein, which can include euthanized animals and the drugs used to kill them with, among other toxins.
- Vegetable fats like flax and safflower oil: cats can't convert this to the appropriate fatty acid.

### **GRAINS/CARBOHYDRATES**

A cat's natural prey like the mouse would be around 3% carbohydrates. Cats actually have little metabolic need for carbohydrates and no way to convert carbs to energy the way dogs and humans can. Grains are added to dry kibble to make it easier to handle for humans. The most appropriate grain for cats, according to research, is rice, and the most appropriate form for rice is rice bran. It should come after the protein sources in the list of ingredients.

### **What to avoid**

- Wheat and soy: known allergens for cats
- Wheat fiber: a known irritant for cats.
- Corn: proven to have more bioavailable protein than other grains, but still less appropriate than meat sources.

**NOTE:** Corn and soy also have a very good chance of being contaminated with genetic modification (GM). Some estimate up to 80% of non-organic corn crops have been genetically modified. None of these GM crops have even been studied in the long run for their effect on humans, much less on cats. Unless you want yourself and your pets to be unpaid research subjects for corporate agriculture, you might want to avoid these products.

- Potatoes and sweet potatoes: there is presently no published research on the effects on cats of newer carbohydrate additives such as potatoes or sweet potatoes. Until the manufacturers can show proof these ingredients are safe, it's probably best to avoid them.
- Gluten: many formulas have gluten as a source of carbohydrates as well as protein. Gluten was proven to be a risky ingredient imported from China in the form of melamine during the 2007 pet food recalls that killed millions of companion animals.

## FIBER

Up to 90% of the immune system response lies in the intestine. Fiber plays a huge role in making sure the intestine is healthy. Rice bran and beet fiber have proven to be good sources of fiber for felines in that they provide the fermentability for good bacteria as well as not lowering the digestibility of the rest of the food.

### What to avoid

- Cellulose: the least fermentable fiber for felines. This may push the food through too quickly for proper nutrients to be absorbed.
- Oat fiber, peanut hulls, psyllium gum, soy hulls, citrus pulp and lactulose are also not fermentable by cats, according to research, acting like cellulose in the gut.
- Fructooligosaccharides (FOS), guar gum, locust bean gum and citrus pectin are actually too high in fermentability and can cause gas, diarrhea and loss of nutrients.
- Peas & pea fiber: another inexpensive filler and highly insoluble. Note there is zero research available on its effect on cats.

## VITAMINS & MINERALS

Cats need most of the same vitamins and minerals that dogs do, with the following exceptions. Cats need more Vitamin A than dogs because they can't convert beta carotene. They also need twice the amount of B Vitamins: (Thiamine, Riboflavin, Pyridoxine, Pantothenic Acid, Niacin and B-12). Most commercially prepared diets contain the recommended amounts of vitamins and minerals for cats and it can be dangerous to supplement past minimum requirements.

### What to avoid

- Vitamin K3, otherwise known as Menadione or Menadione Sodium Bisulfite or Bisulphate: a cheap and artificial form of Vitamin K that causes many serious side effects. This is banned for human use here in the US as well as in Europe.

## VEGETABLES & FRUITS

A vet once said that if cranberries were good enough for him, they were good enough for his cat. Based on that reasoning, he should be thriving on a primarily protein diet of mice, small birds, eggs and fish. That's not the case, of course.

The only well-researched sources of vegetable nutrition for cats are pumpkin, rice bran and beet fiber. Many cat foods, especially higher-end ones, are marketed toward the human, not the cat. This leads to unresearched additives like tomatoes, blueberries, cranberries, potatoes, carrots, spinach, apples, zucchini...the list goes on. In addition, avocados have been found to be toxic to cats.

Cats suffer with less research funding than dogs have, so many of these ingredients have not been proven to be safe. Cats' simpler livers lack certain enzymes and amino acids to process these ingredients which are exotic to the normal diet of cats. Until the pet food manufacturers can prove the safety of these ingredients, it's simply unnecessary—and downright dangerous—to feed your cat food that has these in it.

### What to avoid

- Cranberries: a growth industry from overproduction of cranberries, with no research to guarantee either safety or health improvement, especially in cats. In fact, the benzoic acid of cranberries has been proven toxic to cats.

- Blueberries, apples, acai berries, tomatoes or any other fruit: no research to support their safety.
- Carrots, spinach, turnip greens, zucchini, green beans or any other vegetable but pumpkin: no research to support their safety.
- Avocados: all parts are toxic to animals and research says, “Feeding avocados to any non-human animal should be completely avoided.”

## **HERBS & HERBAL ADDITIVES**

Again, cats' livers cannot process many of the same things dogs can, so you should never assume the safety of exotic ingredients unless your pet food manufacturer can show you the research. Many herbal additives, such as yucca, alfalfa, green tea and parsley are included as enticements for the cats' humans, with no proof of their safety for the cats themselves.

### **What to avoid**

- Yucca Schidigera Extract: purported to decrease the odor in feces, Yucca is on many lists of plants toxic to both dogs and cats.
- Rosemary Extract: cheap preservative known to cause seizures in cats and small dogs and not proven safe, either in the US or in Europe.
- Alfalfa, green tea, parsley, licorice root, angelica root, fenugreek, marigold, fennel, peppermint, chamomile, dandelion, savory, or any other herbs: no research to support their safety.

## **PRESERVATIVES**

Mixed tocopherols (Vitamin E) have been proven to be safe and effective preservatives in cat and dog food. Recently, manufacturers have begun to add cheaper and more deadly preservatives to their formulas.

### **What to avoid**

- Ethoxyquin: actually a pesticide which may compromise your cat's health over time.
- BHA & BHT: cheap chemical additives not proven to be safe.

## **THICKENERS**

This is an odd category, but must be included for canned cat food, since almost all brands have some in them.

### **What to avoid**

- Carrageenan: a known cancer-causing substance for humans, it is also known to produce intestinal lesions, ulcerations and tumors in experimental animals. It can be avoided in some canned cat food.
- Guar Gum: shown to decrease the digestibility of protein in cat food. Very sticky substance that may cause canned food to stick more to cats' teeth. Hard to avoid in canned food.

## **FOOD COLORING**

Cats can only see minor variations in color, so any bright colors in food are put there for the humans, not for the food. No food coloring has proven to be safe for felines, so if your cat's food isn't meat colored, avoid it.

***Credit and thanks to [happycatshaven.org](http://happycatshaven.org).***

## Cat Food: What Should I Feed My Cat



We get this question quite often at Happy Cats. We have a comprehensive list of ingredients to look for and avoid here. The biggest factors on this list are the quality of the protein and the avoidance of known toxic ingredients.

The fact is there are few foods on the market that meet those criteria. The decision is also complicated by availability, cost, and style of feeding. As your cat's guardian, you will have to weigh those factors to make the best choice you can to keep your cat healthy.

Cats are obligate carnivores, which means they are biologically oriented to thrive on a species-appropriate diet of high quality protein. Investing a little more in higher quality food when your cat is young can pay off in better health and lower medical costs as your cat ages.

Each food type has its champions and detractors. We hope this gives you basic information so you can make your own best decision for you and your cat.

### DRY FOOD

Most people feed their cats dried food or kibble.

#### Advantages

- Easy to feed
- Cats can eat when they're hungry
- Most cats like it
- Usually more cost effective

#### Disadvantages

- Can be high in carbohydrates, low in protein
- Said to be a culprit in the current epidemic of feline obesity, leading to diabetes
- Low in water which is said to contribute to kidney disease

There is a movement in the pet food industry to make "grain free" dry foods. Usually, this means replacing such fibers as corn, wheat and rice with potatoes, peas, oats, etc. As far as we can find, the latter have not been researched as safe for long-term use in cats.

[Please click here for our recommendations for dry food.](#)

## **WET FOOD**

Some veterinarians recommend feeding only wet, or canned, food. For most purposes, we recommend the pate food rather than the flaked food in gravy. Many cats will lick off the gravy and not eat the meat, which leaves them with incomplete nutrition full of thickeners and glutens.

### **Advantages**

- Gives cats more water in the diet
- Usually very palatable
- Easier to hide supplements or medication in

### **Disadvantages**

- Must be schedule fed which eliminates a cat's natural pattern of eating small meals frequently
- May be higher in cost
- Often sticks to cats' teeth which may lead to dental disease

[Please click here for our recommendations for wet food.](#)

## **RAW FOOD**

There's a growing movement, even among some veterinarians, to feed fresh raw food. This is a complicated decision, however. You either must make your own or rely on ready-made frozen or freeze-dried sources.

Raw food has to be fed correctly. As Dr. Jean Hofve, a leading veterinary proponent of raw food, says, "The best diet you can feed your cat is a properly prepared homemade diet, but the worst diet you can feed your cat is an improperly prepared homemade diet!" Dr. Karen Becker, another veterinary proponent of raw food, says, "If you find that you're leaving ingredients out and it's too much trouble, you're better off with commercial frozen or canned products, or even dry food."

### **Advantages**

- Said to cure many difficult diseases, such as Irritable Bowel Disorder and allergies
- May foster better coats and teeth
- Leaves less waste to clean up after

### **Disadvantages**

- Can be more work to prepare
- Must be schedule fed
- Many cats—especially those raised on commercial foods—dislike it initially
- Can be expensive on the front end
- If not prepared correctly, a raw food diet can lead to deficiencies in your cat

[Please click here for our recommendations for raw food.](#)

## COMBINATION

Many pet parents opt to feed a combination. Perhaps they schedule feed at night and leave out some kibble during the day. Or perhaps wet food is the treat that's added to a dry diet. There are many ways to keep your cat happy, as long as he or she is getting good nutrition.

## CAT TREATS

Treats don't need to make your cat fat. Simply make sure the treats are high-quality protein that takes the place of some of your cat's regular food. It's also a great idea to use treats for clicker play. Your cat will love being engaged with you doing something fun, plus you'll have fun with your cat!

[Please click here for our recommendations for cat treats.](#)

## A NOTE ABOUT HOW (& where!) TO FEED

Cats instinctively take their prey away from other cats to eat. When we expect multiple cats to eat side-by-side, we may be setting them up for conflict.

[Please click here for our recommendations for feeding & watering your cat.](#)

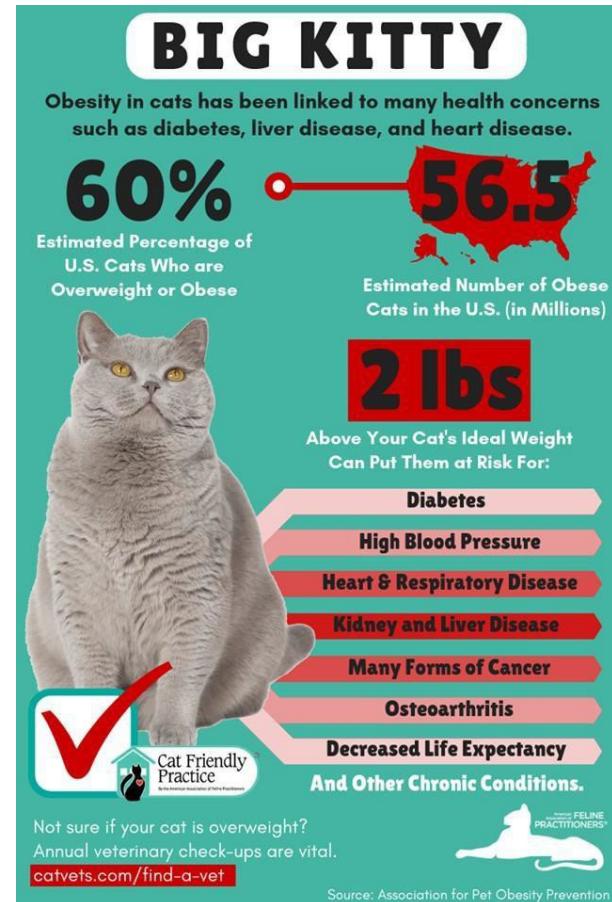
Please see the article below for more background information & references:

[Ingredients: what to feed and what to avoid](#)

*Credit and thanks to [happycatshaven.org](#).*



*Credit and thanks to [carenorthshore.org](#)*



*Credit and thanks to [Association of Pet Obesity Prevention](#)*

# Food Recommendations

## Mother Nature Knows Best

Cats thrive on a diet that resembles their natural diet: one rich in meat-based protein, with high moisture content, fat and little or no carbohydrates. Cats evolved from a desert-dwelling animal where small prey was abundant; vegetation and water were sparse. As a result, a cat's digestive system became very efficient at converting fat and protein into energy but has difficulty processing carbohydrates. In addition, cats are designed to obtain most of their water through their prey which typically consists of 75% water.

## Good Health is related to Diet

There is a strong and logical connection between the food cats eat and their long-term health. Two common reasons for chronic feline health problems are diets too high in carbohydrates and too low in moisture.

### Minimize Carbohydrates:

Dry foods may contain as much as 50% carbohydrates. Since cats cannot efficiently process carbohydrates, they are stored as fat. This leads to obesity.

The effects of obesity are:

- \* Heart disease because obesity increases the workload on the heart.
- \* Orthopedic problems are increased because of increased physical stress on the frame, leading to arthritis and early debilitation.
- \* Diabetes is a condition in which the pancreas doesn't produce the amount of insulin that it should help metabolize blood sugar.
- \* Several liver disorders occur more frequently in overweight cats.

**Cats Need Moisture from Food: WATER** is vital to your cat's health. Dry foods only contain 10 percent water whereas canned foods contain approximately 78 percent water. A cat whose diet consists of mostly dry food will drink more water than a cat eating canned food; but in the end, when water from all sources is added together (what's in their diet plus what they drink), the cat on dry food consumes approximately **half** the amount of water compared with a cat eating canned foods. Since cats do not have a strong thirst drive compared to other mammals, it is critical that they get plenty of moisture **from** their food. This is crucial when one considers the effects of chronic dehydration and how common kidney and bladder problems are in today's cat.

## What to Look For in Cat Food

**Wet/Canned Food:** The key in choosing a good type of food is to read the ingredients. Avoid meat by-products. The more meat ingredients are in the first few positions, the better the food.

Here's a good example of an ingredient list from a high quality canned food: Turkey, chicken, liver, chicken, chicken broth...

Here's one from a low quality product: Meat by-products, ocean fish, water, poultry by-products, fish broth...

Canned/wet food is often considered better for cats because it is closer to what they would eat in the wild than dry food. Wet food has higher levels of protein and moisture, and lower levels of carbohydrates. Where wet food keeps your cat hydrated, dry food dehydrates your cat. Many vets now recommend always feeding wet food.

**Dry Food:** Again, the key to choosing a good quality food is to look for high quality protein.





## Where to Find Quality Foods

You will find most premium quality cat foods at pet specialty stores not at the supermarket. **Relying on supermarket brands of cat food is analogous to feeding your children fast food for every meal.** These foods may be fine for an occasional treat but should not be fed every day. RAW food is the popular these days and for good reason. All animals thrive on raw food. However, the pet food industry is so big and has refused to enter this area of the market because fresh raw food requires significant cold storage, during production, during shipping, and at the market. Raw food is more expensive but down the road it may pay off with reduced vet bills. Many people are preparing their own raw food. There a many websites and social media groups dedicated to providing recipes. But be careful with some of these. If you don't make the meal balanced, your pet will suffer. Thus, we recommend sticking with freeze dried raw. It is expensive but cats love it. If your cat is a picky eater, try freeze dried patties crumbled on top of their existing food as a treat. Companies are now making freeze dried toppers, so you don't have to crumble the food yourself. Just be consistent. If your feeding a chicken-based diet, stick to chicken Freeze Dried, don't make a huge switch to beef. Your cat's gut will not be happy! Remember, don't feed an all fish diet. Fish is fine as a treat, but most cats are allergic. You may not seem them itching and sneezing, but their gut can become inflamed. Long term, this may cause intestinal cancer.

Petsmart [www.petsmart.com](http://www.petsmart.com)

PetCo <https://www.petco.com/>

Chewy.com (Online Only) <https://www.chewy.com/>

A Pet's Paradise – Natural Alternative (Downtown Denver) [www.APetSupplyParadise.net](http://www.APetSupplyParadise.net)

Chuck & Don's <https://chuckanddons.com/>

Darwin's Pet Food (Online Only – Frozen Raw Meals) [www.darwinspet.com](http://www.darwinspet.com)

### Resources and Recommended Links

- [catnutrition.org](http://catnutrition.org)
- <https://www.hupso.com/www/maxshouse.com>
- [catinfo.org](http://catinfo.org)
- [felinediabetes.com/hodgkinsarticle.htm](http://felinediabetes.com/hodgkinsarticle.htm)

*Credit and thanks to Lori Festenstein for Heartland Animal Shelter.*

# How to Prevent Litter Box Problems

Under normal conditions, your cat will like to use her litter box. Changes in your cat's litter box behavior can almost always be traced to a medical condition, stress, or something she dislikes about her litter box environment. Fortunately, a little know-how and preventive maintenance can greatly reduce the chance of litter box problems.

## But First...

- ❖ Never punish or yell at your cat for not using her litter box; that only makes things worse.
- ❖ Any acute or prolonged signs of litter box difficulties, such as urinating more frequently, avoiding the litter box, or **straining**, could indicate an **urgent** medical condition; call your vet right away.

## The Perfect Litter Box Environment

- ❖ **Location.** Put the litter box in a pleasant location: easy to access, away from noisy or high-traffic areas, out of the dog's and baby's reach. Some cats, especially older or handicapped cats, prefer a litter box on each floor of the house. Beware of putting the litter box directly on soft carpet; for some cats, the adjacent carpet feels like litter.
- ❖ Use a minimum of one litter box per cat.
- ❖ **Litter.** Every cat has a favorite litter – work with your cat to find out her preference. When in doubt, start with an unscented clumping litter. Although the jury's still out on this, if you have a kitten, you may want to avoid clumping litters that contain sodium bentonite. Keep kitty's box filled with about two inches of litter, unless directed otherwise by the package. When changing litters, do it gradually over several days, or fill a second box with the new litter.
- ❖ **Type of box.** Some cats don't care for covered litter boxes. If you use a covered box, remember to scoop and clean often, as odors can be trapped inside. Some cat owners like automatic-cleaning litter boxes, others don't. As with litter, your cat will help guide you in your selection.
- ❖ **Clean!** Scoop clumping litter at least once a day, other litters as directed. Wash the litter box and replace the litter weekly. Use a mild soap and rinse well. An occasional 1-part-in-10 bleach solution is fine if you rinse thoroughly. Stay away from ammonia and citrus-scented or strong-smelling cleaners.
- ❖ **Routine.** Once you and kitty find a system that you're both comfortable with, "stay the course."

## Minimize Stress

Play with your cat each day. Make sure she has some convenient scratching posts that she *uses*. Let her sleep undisturbed in a comfy place. Give her some nice views, fun cardboard boxes to explore, a cat tree (or reasonable facsimile) to climb, and a small family of partially hidden catnip mice to discover – accommodate her natural curiosity *safely*. Strive for a harmonious household. Tell your cat what a great kitty she is and give her affection each day – but don't invade her space when she prefers to be left alone. Cats derive comfort from a predictable routine; if major changes such as a move or a new baby are inevitable, gently and gradually acclimate kitty, and maintain her routine as much as possible.

## Monitor Kitty's Litter Box Habits

Get to know your cat's eating, drinking, and bathroom habits, and be alert to any changes. When you scoop, do a once over on the litter box contents. Occasionally watch kitty in the act, as long as you don't bother her. The urine amount emptied should be more than tiny; stools should be brown, not immediately hard, and not runny. Your cat should seem comfortable when using her litter box and digging in the litter. There is some room for natural variation in these behaviors – when in doubt, call your vet.

## Special Cases

- ❖ **Kittens** should be introduced to the litter box early. If your kitten goes outside the box, wipe up the waste with a paper towel, put the towel in the box, and help kitty cover up – she'll catch on.
- ❖ **Declawed cats** might be more reluctant to dig in the litter, and may require a lighter litter.
- ❖ **Older, handicapped, and injured cats** will appreciate more and shallower litter boxes

*Credit and thanks to Franny Syufy for [cats.about.com](http://cats.about.com).*

## Do Kittens Lose Their Baby Teeth?



By [Kelly Roper](#) LoveToKnow Editor and Cat Fancier at <https://cats.lovetoknow.com/>  
Contributor: [Mychelle Blake](#)



Just like puppies, kittens lose their baby teeth. While this process usually poses little to no difficulty for a kitten, it's good to be aware that the transition is taking place. That way you can watch for any problems, such as sore gums or retained baby teeth, and address them as needed.

### A Timeline of What to Expect With Your Kitten's Teeth

Kitten teeth fall out in a set pattern, so if you notice your kitten is losing its teeth, don't be concerned. The following is a timeline and [process for kittens](#) losing teeth.

#### A Kitten's First Set of Teeth: Milk Teeth Grow From Three to Six Weeks

A [kitten's](#) first set of teeth are known as primary teeth or "milk teeth." This first set has 26 teeth which begin erupting through the gums around [three weeks](#) of age, and they are typically all visible by the time a kitten is six weeks old. The first teeth you will see coming out of a kitten's gums are the [front incisors](#). These will be followed by their canine teeth which should be visible when a kitten is one month old. Finally, at six weeks the premolars will be visible.

#### Kittens Lose Baby Teeth Between Three and Four Months

Somewhere between three and four months old, a [kitten](#) begins shedding its primary teeth as the adult teeth begin pushing through the gums behind them. You may be able to see a permanent tooth coming in right behind the corresponding loose primary tooth since these two processes of erupting and shedding happen almost simultaneously. While there is no set order regarding which teeth are shed first, the incisors are often the first shed, followed by the fangs/canines.

#### Adult Set of Teeth Are Complete at About Six Months

By the time [a kitten](#) reaches six months old, the full set of permanent adult teeth have usually replaced the primary teeth completely. This new set has 30 teeth, including four molars. The process for [adult teeth](#) is much the same as with kitten teeth as the incisors will be the first to come in and it [usually starts](#) when the kitten is around three-and-a-half to four months old.

## Care of Your Kitten During Teething

The transition from primary to permanent teeth usually goes fairly smoothly, but there are a couple of things [to watch out for](#).

### Dealing With Sore Gums

Just as with human babies, teething can irritate the gums. While your kitten is teething, you may notice:

- Your kitten begins chewing a lot more, especially on inappropriate items like shoes, furniture, and bedding.
- She may drool since the pressure of the permanent teeth pressing against the small roots of the primary teeth signals her system to begin dissolving the primary roots so they can shed more easily.
- She may also paw at her mouth or rub her face against other objects more than usual.
- She may even become reluctant to eat if her gums feel particularly painful.

If you notice any of these signs, make sure your kitten has soft chew toys she can use to help the shedding process along. She'll feel better once those baby teeth have come out and the tips of the adult teeth break through the gums. You can also feed her wet food rather than dry because wet food is easier to chew. You can add dry [kitten food](#) back into her diet once the worst of her teething is over.



### Watch for Retained Baby Teeth

Sometimes a baby tooth remains in place even though the adult tooth has completely erupted through the gums. This is known as a retained primary tooth, and it can crowd the permanent teeth and interfere with their correct placement. Nonaligned teeth can damage other permanent teeth as well as the gums and roof of the mouth.

Sometimes the retained tooth will eventually come out on its own, but a veterinarian may need to remove the primary tooth if it shows no sign of loosening. Although looking in a kitten's mouth is easier said than done, try to take a look and consult your vet if you still see a retained primary tooth after your kitten turns six months old. The vet can examine the kitten and decide if the tooth truly needs to be removed, or if it's safe to wait a while longer and see if it comes out on its own. Surgical removal should be a last resort because the procedure involves anesthetizing the kitten.

### Healthy Teeth, Happy Life

A healthy set of permanent teeth ensures your pet can eat without any problems and chew her toys as she sees fit. Keeping an eye on her progress as she sheds her first set of baby teeth will help you spot any issues as they arise, which can keep problems to a minimum. It's also a good idea to have your vet examine your pet's teeth annually to make sure they remain healthy throughout her entire life.

*Credit and thanks to Kelly Roper and Mychelle Blake at [catslovetoknow.com](#).*

## Printable Kitten Growth Chart by Weight



By Mychelle BlakeCat Behavior Consultant



A kitten growth chart provides a way to record and track details of your pet's development through some of her most critical life stages. You will be amazed at how quickly a kitten grows into a full-size adult cat.

### Using the Kitten Growth Chart

You can use the growth chart to track your [kitten's weight](#) as she develops. Download the chart by clicking on the image and you can edit, save, customize, and print it. If you have any issues, see these [helpful troubleshooting tips for Adobe printables](#).

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Word document titled "Kitten Growth Chart". The document includes fields for "Name of Cat:", "Date of Birth:", and "Breed:". Below these are tables for tracking weight over time. The first table has columns for "Weeks" (1-16) and "Adult Weight (1 year)". The second table has columns for "Weight" (in oz, lb, kg, g) and "Age" (in weeks). A note at the bottom left says, "Use the Average Weight row as a guide to judge if your kitten is an appropriate weight. Keep in mind these are average weights and your cat may be smaller or larger depending on the breed. Consult with your veterinarian immediately if your kitten's weight appears too low or too high." A note at the bottom center says, "Cats can be spayed or neutered starting around four months of age." The "loveto know" logo is in the top right corner.

[Click here to download.](#)

[Kitten Growth Chart](#)

### Cat Growth Chart Specifics

To make the most of his handy printable, keep these points in mind.

- ❖ Because kittens put on weight rapidly during the first few weeks of life, the chart tracks weight weekly from one to eight weeks of age. It then moves to track weight milestones at 10, 12 and 16 weeks of life.

- 
- ❖ At 16 weeks of age, most kittens can be spayed or neutered and are considered to have [entered "puberty."](#) At this point, your kitten should be about half his adult weight.
- ❖ Be sure to note the date each time you weigh your kitten.
- ❖ There is an average weight row at the bottom meant to give you an idea of what your kitten's weight should be at each age. Keep in mind that this is the weight for an average cat.
- ❖ If you have a special breed, particularly a larger breed like a [Maine Coon](#) or a smaller breed like a [Siamese](#) or a ["dwarf" cat](#) like a [Munchkin](#), these average weights should be adjusted. Talk with your veterinarian or breeder to determine your breed's healthy average weight gain as a kitten.
- ❖ Male cats are often heavier than female cats. [Male kittens](#) may be up to 40 percent heavier than their female littermates.
- ❖ The chart tracks kitten weight as this is the [best indicator](#) of a kitten's and adult cat's health. [Body size](#), such as height and length, are not as critical to a veterinarian as they are not as indicative of any health issues.
- ❖ You may want to measure their height if you want to provide your kitten with [cat trees](#) and other places to jump on. These should be a safe height your kitten can easily reach.

## Kitten Growth Progress

Each week of a kitten's early life is a new stage in [their development](#). It's important to make sure that your kitten is [displaying normal behavior](#) and biological changes week by week. In general, an average size kitten will [double her body weight](#) during her first week of life. She should gain  $\frac{1}{4}$  ounce to  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce of body weight per day until her fifth week of life. At five weeks, the kitten should weigh around one pound and her weight will slowly increase after that until she reaches her [full adult weight](#) around nine to 12 months of age.

## Problems With Kitten Weight

If you notice that your kitten's weight seems too high or too low, consult with your veterinarian immediately.

### Underweight Kitten

An underweight kitten may harbor a [health condition](#) which requires veterinary attention, [such as fleas](#) or [worms](#). It's possible you may also be underfeeding her as [kittens have higher nutrition needs](#) than adult cats.

### Overweight Kitten

If your kitten seems too heavy, you may be [overfeeding her](#). You will need to adjust her diet or you could cause her to have [diarrhea or cause damage to her liver](#).

## Tracking Your Kitten's Weight With a Growth Chart

A kitten growth chart shows you the important changes occurring in your kitten's early development. It can help you to make sure your kitten is healthy, and your veterinarian will appreciate the extra information you provide.

**Credit and thanks to Mychelle Blake at [cats.lovetoknow.com](#).**

# How to Trim Your Cat's Claws

Regularly trimming your cat's claws is an easy and cat-friendly way to "sharply" reduce the sting from scratching activities. With a little preparation and diligence, claw-trimming can be a simple and pleasant routine.

## Preparation

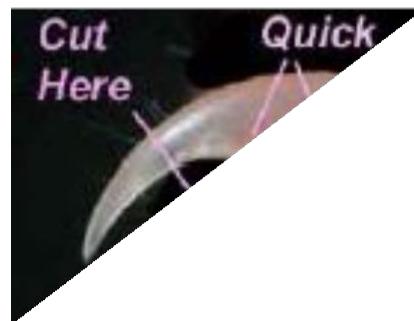
Get your cat used to your handling and gently squeezing her paws. Don't proceed faster than she'll let you; the idea is for her to become comfortable with this. Note: cats are often more agreeable to new things if they get a treat.

In the interim, your vet or a trusted groomer can trim your cat's claws quickly and cheaply, and will usually be glad to show you how.

## Step-by-Step Instructions

Start with a relaxed cat, sharp clippers, and a good light source for best results. Some folks prefer specially-made cat clippers (available in pet supply stores), others use regular human nail clippers. Either device works well.

1. Ease into a position that's comfortable for you and your cat. For some, this means kneeling behind kitty, for others this means supporting her in your lap. Calmly talk to her and pet her. You may want to have a treat reward in plain view.
2. If kneeling down behind your cat, secure her gently between your knees, and take a front paw in your left hand. If kitty's in your lap, have her facing to your right, and support her securely in your left arm with her front paw in your left hand. It may be easier at first to wrap her in a towel with only the paw extended. If you're left-handed, use the opposite hand (and face kitty to your left if she's in your lap).
3. With your thumb on top of her paw, and two or more fingers underneath, press gently but firmly on the pad area to extend a claw. It isn't necessary to squeeze hard.
4. Examine the claw closely under light to find the pink area in the center called the "quick." This is a blood vessel, and will bleed if nicked.
5. Holding the clippers in your other hand, make sure there's no chance that the clippers will catch any of the pad. Then snip off the tip of the claw, being careful not to cut into the quick (see picture).
6. Give kitty a treat and a few kind words for being such a good cat. The more relaxed you and she both are, the easier the process will be.
7. Repeat steps 3 through 6 until you have finished the first paw.
8. If your cat is comfortable and compliant, continue until the nails on both front feet have been clipped. If things are going smoothly, optionally clip the back paws. Don't forget the "dewclaw" on the paw's inside.



## Tips

1. Keep some styptic powder or styptic pads handy in case you accidentally cut into the quick. If this should occur, apply the powder to the nail to stop the bleeding, and call it a day.
2. It may be easier if you have a second person holding the cat. Above all, it's important that you and your cat both be relaxed.

If at any time your cat becomes anxious, stop immediately. You can do one claw every day, if necessary.

**Credit and thanks to Franny Syufy for [cats.about.com](http://cats.about.com).**



# Think Twice Before You Declaw

by Steve Dale

## The Itch to Scratch

Cats do write. They don't communicate with a pen and paper or by using a computer keyboard. Instead, their prose is cat scratch —literally. They scratch to express their excitement and pleasure. They scratch to leave messages, both visual and aromatic. (A cat's paws have scent glands that leave smell-o-grams; we can't read them, but other cats can.)

Cats also scratch, not to sharpen their nails, but to remove the worn-out sheaths from their claws. You see the results as little crescent-moon shaped bits around scratching areas. Scratching is good exercise, too.

Scratching is normal behavior for cats.

### Reality Check

Asking a cat never to scratch is asking a cat not to act like a cat.

Most of us don't mind that cats scratch; what bothers us is *where* they scratch. But nearly all cats can be taught where to scratch — and where not to scratch. Kittens are particularly easy to train, but it's not that difficult to teach the adults, either. The secret is to provide attractive scratching alternatives to the sofa or stereo speakers and then teach the cat to use those alternatives.

### All Cats Scratch: It's Part of Being a Cat!

Just so you know, a typical declaw (called an onychectomy) is an irreversible surgical procedure.

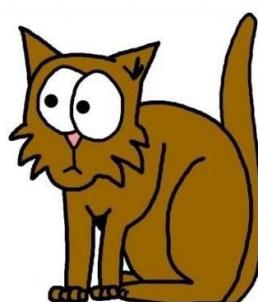
A cat's toe has three bones; the claw grows from the end of the last bone. In declawing, the veterinarian amputates the end section of the last bone, which contains the growth plate, along with the nail. This can be very painful, so pain management is critical before, during and after the procedure.

Some human amputees feel phantom pain long after a limb is gone, and declawed cats also may.

Declawing should never be performed on a cat who goes out- doors, since declawed cats have been disarmed.

In many countries declaw surgery is illegal. The American Association of Feline Practitioners advises veterinarians never to include declawing along with spay/neuter as a promotional incentive or to present declawing as a routine surgical procedure.

Even if many cats ultimately do recover without any adverse effects, why take the chance? Why put your cat through the ordeal and yourself through the expense when there are other options?



## How Cats Scratch

Just as we have our own preferences for either pen and paper or a computer keyboard to write our prose, cats, too, have preferences. While almost all cats relish a vertical scratch, many also enjoy a good horizontal scratch. However, all cats seem to agree about certain requirements for their scratching surfaces.

Because cats like to stretch and scratch, favorite vertical scratchers should be equal to or exceed the cat's height when she is standing on her back legs.

A wobbly vertical scratcher that moves and feels as if it might tip over when a cat sinks her claws in, or a horizontal scratcher that easily slides along the floor, is not stable enough for serious scratching.

Cats like materials they can really sink their claws into. Sisal is particularly popular. Natural wood and carpeting (many cats prefer the back side of the carpet) are also favorites. Again, it's all about individual preferences.

An assortment of surfaces and scratchers is ideal, even in a home with just one cat. And several scratching choices are absolutely necessary in a multi-cat household.

## Scratchers 101

Effective horizontal scratchers are relatively inexpensive to buy from a pet supply store. They are often made of corrugated cardboard and sometimes catnip is included to sprinkle into slits cut in the scratcher. Angled cardboard scratchers especially are appealing to many cats, giving them a combination vertical and horizontal scratch in one.

Good vertical scratchers are tall and sturdy, with a wide, heavy bottom to prevent tipping. Industrious souls can build their



Cats like materials they can really sink their claws into.

own cat trees with materials that are easy to get at home improvement stores.

While purchasing a high quality multi-level cat tree or condo playground is pricey, it's likely to be less expensive than buying a new sofa because the old one has been shredded. The many surfaces and perches will attract feline scratchers of all preferences. And when the cats lounge on the cat tree, there will be less cat hair all over your house.

## Location, Location

When you're thinking about where to put the scratching post, keep in mind that, like all real estate, location is everything. Remember that cats scratch to communicate, and leaving a message hidden in the basement or behind the washing machine is not their idea of effective communication.

You'll need to place the scratching post in places cats want to scratch. These include:

- Near where your family congregates.
- Near a favorite napping location, since cats enjoy a good stretch and scratch after awakening.
- Reasonably close to the front door, since many cats like to scratch after their people arrive home. (*Never think your cat runs to the sofa to scratch after you walk through the door because he's angry that you've been away. In fact, your cat is scratching to express his excitement to see you. Reprimanding a cat for being happy to see you is confusing and can damage your relationship with your cat.*)
- As a part of a feline aerobic center, such as a sprawling cat tree, which may also include places to climb, play and snooze.
- Near a window or places where several cats gather to play and party.

## Scratching School

Kittens are especially easy to instruct about where to scratch, but most any cat will learn. Realistically, it will take more time to teach an adult who has been scratching the sofa her entire life than it will to teach a 12-week-old kitty. However, mostly it depends on the individual cat and how good an instructor you happen to be. Just remember to be fair and consistent.

If you're training an impressionable kitten, begin the first day you bring your baby home. It's easier to start a good habit than undo a bad one. Cats learn by watching, so all you have to do is scratch your nails on the appropriate scratching post and act like you're having a really good time. If your kitten follows your example, offer a pay-off with a tasty morsel and enthusiastically tell your cat how smart she is. Cats have huge egos; they love it when you tell them they're the greatest.

Rubbing catnip on a vertical post and depositing catnip within the corrugated compartment of a horizontal scratcher will entice many adults to scratch.(Young kittens might not be turned on by catnip. Sometimes it's an acquired taste and a small percentage of cats seem to never develop an interest in catnip.)

Play with your cat around the post using an interactive toy (a fishing pole- type toy with feathers or fabric at the end). Even if the cat just accidentally puts her paws on the post, that's a great start, since now your cat's scent has been deposited on it. Consistently make the area near the scratching post a playground.

### Scratching is good exercise, and it's fun!

## Click and Train

One way to teach your cat where to scratch is by using a clicker to tell him when he is doing the right thing. Clickers are inexpensive and easy to find at pet supply stores.

First teach your cat what the clicker means. Click the clicker and drop a treat on the floor. (For noise-sensitive cats, clicking a retractable pen will do.) Soon your cat will come running from another room when you click because he knows the click means food. Once your cat understands that "click" means "a treat is on the way," you can use the sound of the clicker to train him to do just about anything.

Now entice your cat to paw at the post. This might be as simple as you pointing at the post and kitty following your finger. Also, play with him around the scratching post using an interactive toy. The moment your cat touches the post with any part of his body, click and offer a treat.

Learning sessions should never be more than five to ten minutes, and even less time with a kitten. While kittens may actually learn faster than adults, they're at an age when they have very short attention spans. It's important to end a learning session with a treat for a successful behavior.

Begin the next session where you left off—with the kitty merely touching the scratcher. Your next goal is to shape the behavior to what you really want; don't reward the cat until he touches the scratcher with his paw.

In each successive session, hold out for a behavior that's just a little bit closer to what you want before you click and treat. Soon your cat will be scratching at the tree. In addition to the reward it will feel good, so your cat will enjoy the experience. Once your cat begins to scratch regularly, offer rewards only intermittently or else you'll end up with one very pudgy pussy.

## **Bad Kitty**

What if your cat is scratching up a favorite chair or sofa? Don't take it personally! Remember, scratching these things is only inappropriate to you; it's normal to your cat. You'll need to block her access to the inappropriate place, make sure she has a fabulous scratching post to use instead, and then show her what you want her to do.

Discouraging your cat from scratching is most effective when you are not a part of the deterrent. That's because if the reprimand comes from you, your cat quickly figures out she can scratch anywhere when you're not around.

Remember what cats like to scratch and what they don't. They want to dig their claws into a suitable material and they don't like to feel something bumpy or smooth or sticky. That's why Sticky Paws (available at pet supply stores and online) is a superbly effective deterrent. These are strips of double-backed tape (designed not to damage furniture) that you can put on fabric or wood. Another option is ordinary doubled-side tape.

If you need to cover an entire sofa or chair, try a smooth plastic tarp or shower curtain, car floor mats (with the nubby side up) or a plastic rug runner (also nubby side up). When you discourage the cat by simply blocking her access, there is no reason to chase after and/or raise your voice or use a squirt gun. Sometimes these emotional responses will actually encourage cats to scratch since they love doing anything to see their people get excited.

Do you need to leave the tarp on your couch forever? Nope. The idea is to make the inappropriate items unattractive and then provide something very attractive to scratch as an alternative. So if your cat is scratching the arm of the sofa, cover it up and place an enticing scratching post right next to the sofa. It's a set-up that tells your cat, "Don't scratch there, scratch her instead." When your cat is consistently scratching at the right place for several weeks, you can safely uncover the sofa.

## **Paws 'n Order**

Maintain kitty's nails, and he won't need to scratch as often. Keep your cat's nails trimmed by clipping them with a nail cutter every 10 to 14 days. Your veterinarian or a groomer can show you how to do this while offering your cat a special treat as you clip. That way, your cat is so busy eating that he won't notice you're also clipping. Kittens easily learn to associate a special treat with the nail clipper, so they actually look forward to the experience. (Well, at least they won't fuss about it.)

If you and your cat just can't see eye to eye about nail trimming. Soft Paws are soft, temporary nail covers that can be fitted over a cat's claws.

**Cats will scratch as a part of play activity; kitty condo units are great playgrounds in multi-cat homes.**



# **Understanding the Wild in Your Cat**

## **Feline Domestication**

Your cat's earliest ancestors existed 45 million years ago. Much more recently, the domestic cat (*Felis Catus*) descended from the small, wild African bush cat. And about 10,000 years ago in the Fertile Crescent of Western Asia and the Middle East, humans and cats began to interact in a mutually beneficial relationship with cat domestication occurring by about 7500 BCE. When cats' agreeable nature and natural prowess in ridding stored grain of rodents were recognized, attachments between cats and humans followed. From the Fertile Crescent, cat populations grew and spread to countries around the world.

Domestic cats possess many aspects of their wild ancestors. Unlike other domesticated animals, like dogs which underwent genetic selection for ability and agility in hunting, herding, and guarding, the bond between cats and humans together with cats' athletic abilities in hunting made genetic selection unnecessary. Because cats' heightened fight or flight response allowed them to naturally sense and avoid danger and because cats naturally hide pain and illness, humans mistakenly deemed cats to be independent creatures who required little care: carefree helpmates and companions.

Cats, not so independent, are social animals: feral cats choose to live in cooperative colonies. Regardless of their social nature, cats are solitary hunters who must maintain fitness and must avoid fights with other cats in order to survive. Fortunately, feline communication through body language, facial expressions, olfactory marking, and vocalization prevent most food and territory disputes between cats because most cats avoid taking unnecessary risks. Understanding natural feline communication behaviors can also help us recognize their fear, anxiety, and aggression responses and help our best friends in stressful situations.

## **Feline Communication**

Cats' keen senses shape the way they perceive their world. Cats' hearing is approximately four times more sensitive than our own. Their ability to hear a broad range of frequencies bolsters their hunting success, but also causes them stress in our modern world of cacophony. Cats' vision allows them to detect the movement of prey even in low light, but this acute sense but may also cause them alarm and a stressed overreaction to our sudden actions. While cats' sense of smell is not as keen as dogs', it is five to ten times more sensitive than humans. For instance, olfactory organs behind the upper incisors cause cats to open their mouths in order to smell other cats and avoid danger. Cats are also very sensitive to touch, especially stimulation to the whiskers they use to explore their environment. Overstimulation by smell or touch may cause cats to respond fearfully and aggressively.

Learning to read feline communication signals can help us to better interact and care for our cats. Like the body postures best-detailed and illustrated in the article that follows, cats' facial expressions help them communicate and avoid conflict with other cats. Facial expressions can change quickly to indicate a cat's fear or anxiety level. Erect ears indicate alertness and alarm, downward facing and sideways ears indicate defensive fear, and downward and swiveled ears indicate aggressive anger.



Likewise, the eyes of cats reveal their stress level. Their normally slit pupils become widely dilated when cats are fearful and the size of the pupil itself denotes the intensity of the situation. Cats also communicate by blinking slowly to defuse a tense interaction, and we can do just that to help reduce our cat's stress level. Prolonged eye contact with unknown cats or humans is threatening to them.

Our cats' tails also speak volumes. Held up vertically or wrapped, the tail signals a relaxed and friendly state. Held straight down or perpendicular to the ground, the tail signals offensive arousal. Tails whipped from side to side indicate agitation that might soon escalate to aggression.

Cats communicate with each other by leaving olfactory messages through rubbing sebaceous glands located around lips and chin, between the toes, and in anal sacs onto objects, other cats, and people. They also use scratching, spraying, urinating, and fecal marking to protect their space without risking interaction with other cats. Cats also communicate by vocalizing to other cats and to their people. They deftly train their person to respond to vocalizations with food and attention. Cats purr when content, but also when sick or fearful to request attentive care. They use a number of varying trills and meows to greet and solicit attention. Cats also communicate with one another by rubbing against each other and lying close together.

## Feline Learning

Before domestication, cats were taught by their mothers to hunt and kill prey. After domestication, kittens continue to learn by observation, likely an evolutionary adaptation. Kittens observe other cats perform tasks before copying those behaviors. Using positive reinforcement and positive handling, cats' and kittens' behavior can be shaped: tricks may be taught and undesirable behavior prevented. In teaching cats to perform, positive

reinforcement of treats and praise should be given within three seconds of the desired behavior. Undesirable behaviors should be ignored and redirected. Cats should never be punished, verbally or physically, as punishment inhibits learning and increases anxiety.

The particularly sensitive time for kitten socialization is between two and nine weeks old. Events during this period may have long-term effects on their development. Positive handling during this time will deliver individuals who are more stress resistant and less fearful and who learn faster. Enriching the lives of kittens during this period with calm and gentle exposure to a wide variety of stimuli will provide a lifetime of benefits.

### Applying Knowledge of Feline Senses, Feline Communication, and Feline Learning

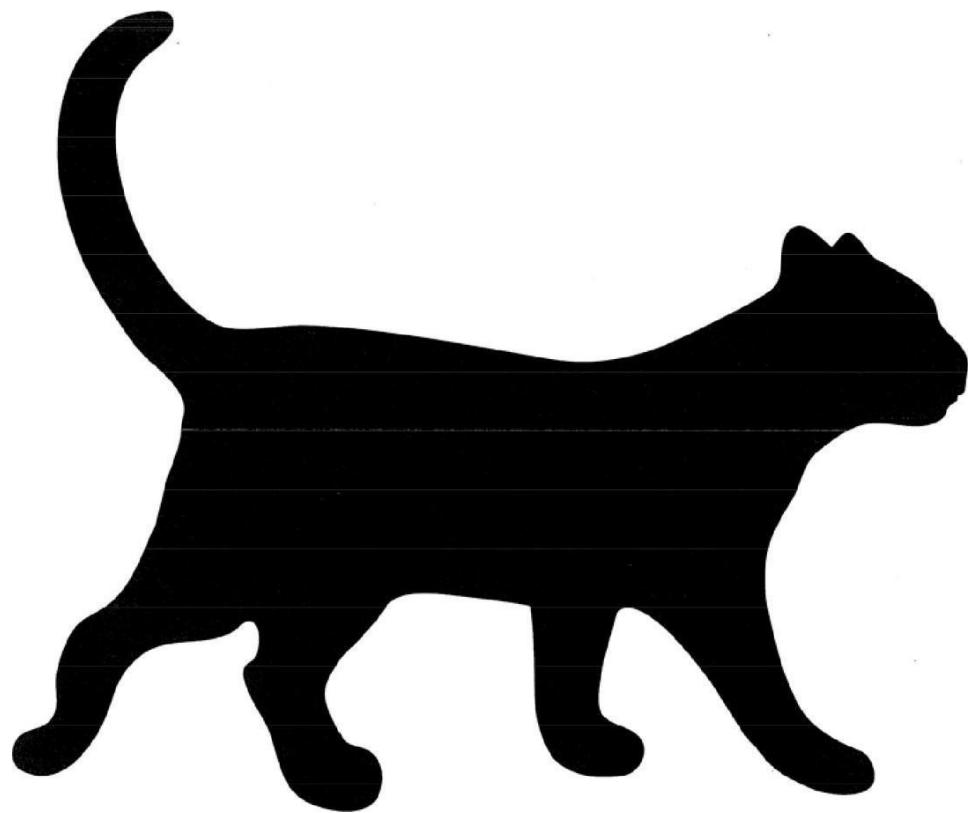
Selecting a vet who has extensive training in treating cats is paramount because your vet must understand the way cats perceive the world and must recognize the subtleties of feline behavior and communication. The vet must be able to recognize fear, anxiety, and aggression in order to de-escalate a potentially stressful exam or procedure. Your cat may feel threatened when visiting the vet, eliciting the four "fight or flight" fear responses of frozen immobility, flight within the office, fighting aggression, or displacement fidgeting. Your vet must be trained to calm and comfort cats, not just dogs!

In veterinary clinics, distressed cats leave recognizable scents of their distress for the next patient to discern. Additionally, the cleaning solution used to remove such scents may also be offensive to your cat. When taking your cat to a clinic, smells from home in the form of a favorite blanket or an unlaundered shirt belonging to their person, may help the cat feel more comfortable. If you must take one cat from a multiple cat household to the vet, consider reintroducing the cats by wiping down the cat that stayed home with a towel and then wiping down the returning cat with the same towel to reduce stress and possible conflict.

One thing you can do to increase your cat's comfort in visiting the veterinary clinic is preparing the carrier you use. By encouraging your cat to use the carrier for play and rest before the visit, the trip will be much more pleasant and less stressful. Spritzing the carrier with a feline pheromone spray 30 minutes before the trip may help keep your cat calm. Covering the carrier with a towel may prevent motion sickness.

You can help also reduce your cat's stress level by allowing your cat to explore the examination room upon entry. Giving your cat some latitude in choosing the position and place to be examined can also help reduce stress. For instance, the bottom of a hard carrier (with the top removed), may provide comfort for your cat. Hard carriers also have the benefit of being easily secured with a seatbelt to make your trip to the vet much safer for your cat. Analgesics given prior to the exam or procedure may be necessary to treat pain and prevent anxiety. Finally, you may wish to consider vet visits to your home as an alternative to stressful office visits.

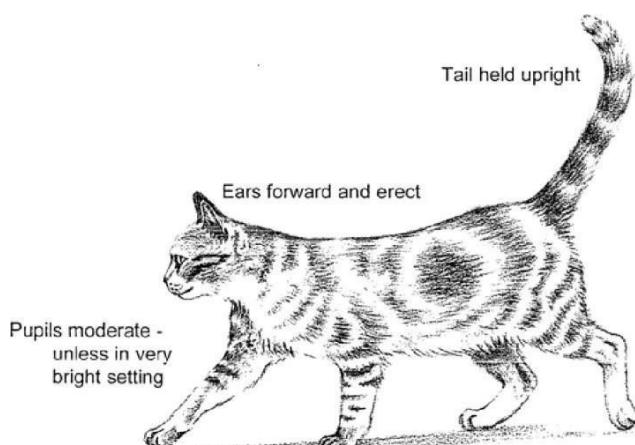
***This article was distilled from [The Cat: Clinical Medicine and Management](#).***



**body posture**

## the confident cat

The confident cat purposefully moves through space, standing straight and tall with tail erect. He is ready to explore his environment and engage those he meets along the way. His upright tail signifies his friendly intentions, while his ears are forward and erect adding to the cat's alert expression.



Purposeful upright walk

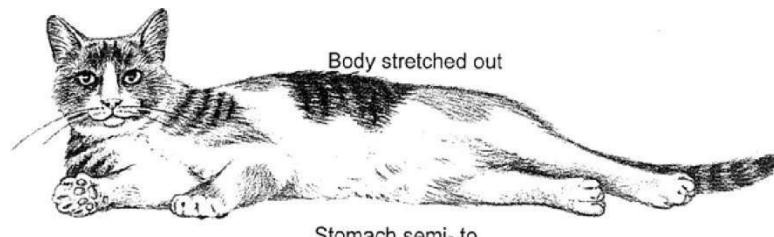
## the confident cat at ease

Head and ears up

When relaxed, a confident cat stretches out on his side or lies on his back exposing his belly. He is in a calm but alert state and accepts being approached. His entire posture is open and at ease; but beware, not every cat that exposes his abdomen will respond well to a belly rub. Some will grasp your hand with their front paws, rake your forearm with their hind feet and bite your hand.

Medium-sized pupils

Whiskers held to the side



Stomach semi- to completely exposed

Paws may flex in kneading motion

## distance-reducing behaviors

Distance-reducing behaviors encourage approach and social interaction and are meant to telegraph to others that the cat means no harm. The act of rubbing against a person's hand or another cat (scent marking) to distribute glandular facial pheromones from the forehead, chin or whisker bed is calming and seems to guarantee friendly interaction immediately afterward. The tail is usually held erect while the cat is scent-rubbing.

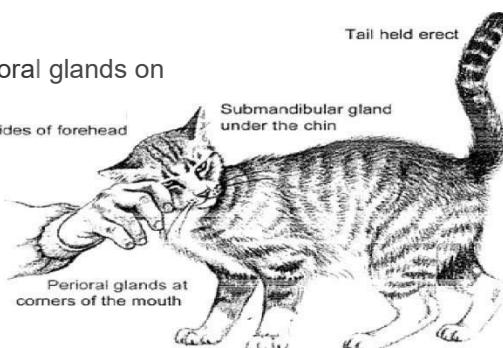
Temporal glands on

sides of forehead

Submandibular gland under the chin

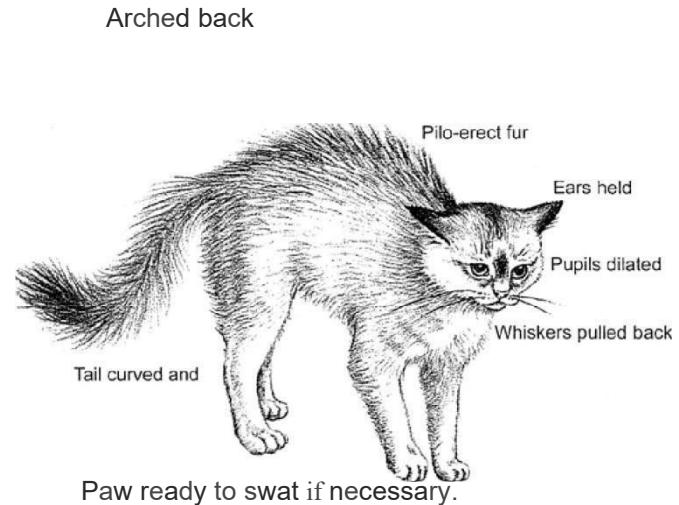
Perioral glands at corners of the mouth

Interdigital glands on the bottoms of all four paws



## distance-increasing behaviors

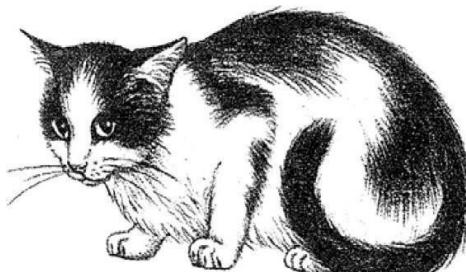
The goal of distance-increasing behaviors is to keep others from coming closer. Aggressive interactions are avoided when the warnings are heeded. Conflicted cats lack the confidence to stare down and charge others. Instead, they assume a defensive threat posture, warning others away by appearing as formidable as possible by arching their backs, swishing their tails, and standing sideways and as tall as possible. Fear and arousal cause their fur to stand on end (pilo-erection) and pupils to dilate.



Body hunched muscles tensed

## the anxious cat

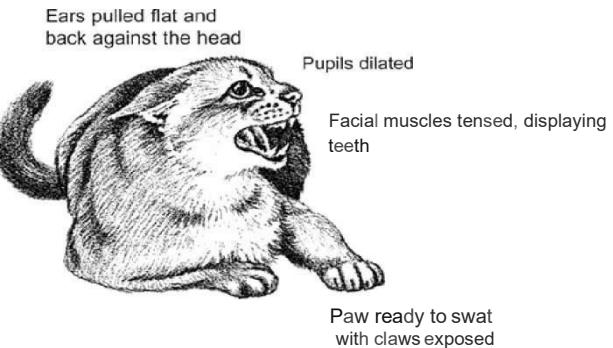
Ears swiveled sideways  
Enlarged pupils

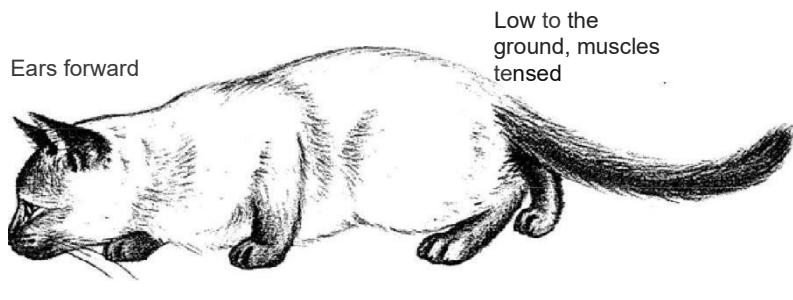


When a cat becomes anxious, he crouches into a ball, making himself appear smaller than usual. Muscles are tensed and the cat is poised to flee if necessary. The tail is held close to the body, sometimes wrapped around the feet. The head is held down and pulled into the shoulders.

## defensive aggression

The pariah threat is another distance-reducing posture. When a cat determines that he cannot escape an unwanted interaction with a more dominant animal, he prepares to defend himself. The ears are pulled back and nearly flat against the head for protection and the head and neck are pulled in tight against the body. Facial muscles tense, displaying one weapon - the teeth. The cat rolls slightly over to one side in order to expose the rest of his arsenal - his claws. He is now ready to protect himself.

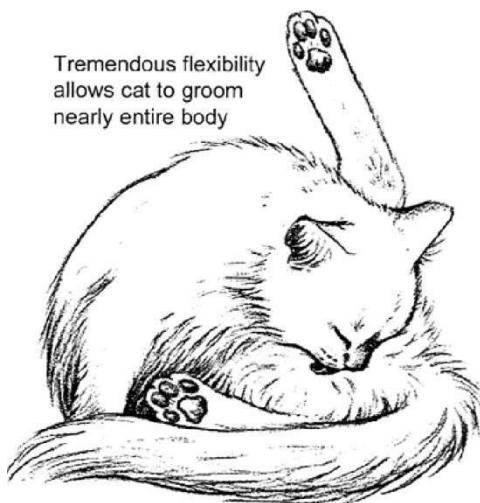




May shift weight between  
back feet, readying to  
pounce

## the predator

Even when fed two meals a day, cats are still predators. The predatory sequence is stalk, pounce, kill, remove, and eat. When stalking prey, a cat may stealthily move forward or lie in wait, shifting his weight between his hind feet. When movement is detected, the cat pounces on his prey and delivers a killing bite. He may then take the fresh-killed prey to a quiet place to eat -- or a female may take it to her kittens. Even cats that don't hunt for their meals still enjoy chasing moving objects, including toys and, in some cases, human body parts.



Backward-facing barbs on tongue

## the groomer

Cats spend 30 to 50 percent of their waking time grooming. Backward-facing barbs on the tongue act as a comb to loosen tangles and remove some parasites. Beyond maintaining the cat's coat, grooming also relieves tension and promotes comfort. Licking also facilitates cooling off in warm weather.

**Credit and thanks to [www.aspapro.org](http://www.aspapro.org).**

## Oh Those Quirky, but Not Necessarily Appreciated Feline Behaviors!

Cats are generally delightful pets, giving us endless joy with their presence. They can also be amazingly confusing animals, seemingly delighting in bewildering mere humans with all manner of behaviors. Below are some common behaviors you may encounter in the years you share with your feline friend, along with some ways to cope with or change them. Be sure to check with your vet if any change of behavior occurs suddenly as there could be a medical issue involved.

### **Aggressive Behavior:**

#### **Declawed cats biting:**

Unfortunately, some declawed cats behave aggressively at times. It is possible they feel defenseless and resort to biting as a means of communication.

You may or may not be able to train your cat to bite less. She must feel as comfortable as possible - she's biting because she feels threatened. When working to retrain your cat to bite less, introduce something that makes her uncomfortable *ONLY* when she misbehaves. For example, at the exact moment she tries to bite, quickly mist her with a spray bottle (do not spray directly in her eyes), or shake a can that has a few coins in it, or make another startling noise. Next, if she is biting when she interacts with you, and it is pleasurable for her (such as petting or playing), stop interacting with her immediately. These tactics will require a lot of patience and may never completely stop the biting behavior.



#### **Petting Aggression (over stimulation):**

Some experienced cat owners are familiar with this problem: you're petting Kitty, she seems to like it because she is purring and suddenly, CHOMP! Her teeth are firmly planted on your hand!

The consensus is that the cat is over-stimulated during petting, and can't quite figure out how to tell you to stop. The best thing to do is DON'T PANIC. Slowly withdraw your hand and move away from the cat. If you are holding kitty at the time, pull your hands away and allow her to retreat, or stand up and let her jump to the floor.

Learn how to recognize signals that precede biting: wildly flicking tail, ears laid back, dilated pupils, or body tensing. When you notice any of these, stop touching kitty and allow her to move away on her own.

When training your kitty, start with short time periods of petting then slowly increase the length of time. Always back away slowly when the cat shows signs of frustration.

Then there are some cats that prefer other methods of human interaction besides petting; for those animals, try playing with them more and petting them less.

#### **Play Biting/Aggression:**

It is best to understand kitty's behavior, before attempting to change it. Under-stimulation, an excess of unused energy, and lack of appropriate opportunities for play can also lead to undesirable behavior. This may be exhibited as overly rambunctious or aggressive play, which inadvertently may lead to injuries to people. In some cases, the play can include a number of components of the cat's predatory nature including the stalk, pounce, and bite. Although this type of play is usually more common in kittens, it may persist through adulthood. Cat play is simulated best with objects that can be stalked, chased, swatted, or pounced upon.

Providing ample opportunities for self-play aids in reducing play with owners. In addition, before you consider using an interruption or punishment device (water sprayer, alarm, and compressed air), the cat should first receive enough play alternatives. Anticipate your cat's need to play and initiate interactive play sessions. Play toward the owners (including ambushing and ankle biting), which is initiated by the cat, should never be tolerated. Successful interactive toys include wiggling ropes, wands, dangling toys, and toys that are thrown or rolled for the cat to chase. Toys that dangle on strings or ropes should only be used with human supervision to avoid circulation or nerve injuries – or worse, strangulation.

For self-play, provide your cat with toys such as ping-pong balls, walnuts in the shell, catnip-filled toys, battery-operated or spring-mounted toys, scratching posts, or toys within containers that deliver food or treats when scratched or manipulated. Hiding treats in various locations stimulates searching behavior that cats enjoy. Bird feeders outside of windows occupy some cats, while others might be interested in videos for cats. Cats with a strong desire for social play benefit from a second kitten to act as a playmate - provided both are adequately socialized and properly introduced.

#### **Redirected (or misplaced) aggression:**

One of the most difficult types of aggression for owners to understand is called "redirected aggression." In this form of aggression, a cat generally attacks the closest object, often a family member or a cat in the same household, when it is frightened or excessively aroused by a stimulus that is inaccessible. The most common stimuli leading to redirected aggression are the presence of another cat, high-pitched noises, visitors in a house, a dog, an unusual odor and being outdoors unexpectedly.

If your cat becomes agitated, first, avoid her until she calms down. If aggression is redirected toward another cat in the household, the two cats may have to be separated. With some cats, this separation may only need to last a few minutes, but with others, it may take hours. In rare cases, it may take several days or the cat may remain aggressive. This is most likely if the redirected aggression was met with retaliation, punishment, or another form of fearful event (perhaps to separate the cat from the victim). If the attack leads to a change in relationship between the cat and the victim (fear, defensiveness) then the aggression may persist.

The best way to calm an agitated cat is to put her in a darkened room and leave her there. If she is too stimulated, leave the cat alone in the room. Picking up an angry cat can lead to bites and/or scratches to the guardian. Some cats may need to be kept in the room anywhere from several minutes to several days. The guardian can go in, turn on the light, offer food to the cat, and if she remains fearful or does not accept the food, the guardian should turn out the lights and leave. If the aggression has been directed toward another cat in the home, it is very important to wait until the cats are calm before reintroducing them. The biggest mistake that guardians make in trying to resolve this problem is to try and bring the cats together too soon.

Aggression in cats can also be triggered by fear, pain, or territorial issues.

#### **The Stressed Kitty:**

We often look at our cats with envy. After all, who else gets away sleeping 18 hours a day, with interruptions only for grooming, eating, playing and stretching, not to mention a little lovin' from their favorite human?

Despite their idyllic lifestyle, kitties can become stressed -- often by the simplest of things. Some cats are naturally very curious and look at change as chance to explore new things. Maybe you have moved the furniture around the living room or put in new carpeting. Perhaps you've moved the litter box from one end of the room to another. While some cats will find this exciting and fun, others find that you have totally disrupted their routine, and now you have a stressed cat on your hands. It's hard to predict what may trigger stress in your cat, but when it happens, she has a variety of ways to let you know. Some may change their litter box habits; others develop illnesses such as upper respiratory or bladder infections. Still others may exhibit some of the aggressive behaviors listed above.

There are ways to reduce stress. Try to keep kitty's routine as normal as possible. Your work hours may have changed, but see if you can find a way to feed her at about the same time each day. Consider investing in an automatic feeder for this purpose.

If you are moving or redecorating, place kitty in one room with all of her favorite toys, food, water, and litter box during the upheaval. Be sure to spend lots of time playing with and petting her. If you are moving, leave some articles of your clothing with kitty- something that smells familiar. Keep kitty confined in the new home as well, giving her time to adjust to the new smells and then slowly introduce her to the entire home. Use of a Feliway diffuser, or a spray mist of diluted lavender oil can also be calming to a cat.

Calm your stressed kitty by speaking softly in a slightly higher pitched voice. Stroke her gently on the forehead with one finger (mimicking the mother cat grooming her kitten). Say her name often and try to use as few words as possible with a "hiss" sound. Give her some treats to remind her that you are provider of good things!

When possible, make changes slowly to avoid stressing your kitty in the first place, especially if you have a shy or sensitive cat. Don't move all the furniture at once, maybe just a piece or two every couple of days. If you must move the litter box, move it slowly. You may find that your cat really does like it best where it is now and won't use it in a different location, especially if the location change is dramatic and done too fast.

### **The Alpha Female Cat**

Among spayed and neutered cats, there are some female felines that are dominant by nature - these are the alpha females. In a multiple cat household, there is often a female at the top of the cat hierarchy (there is not always an alpha female although it is possible for a female to assume the role of alpha in a single cat household). This cat has a lot of responsibility - it is her job to keep all of the other cats in line. She may not find much time to play because of all this responsibility. She cannot change this; it's just her personality.

An alpha female must keep her place at the top of the hierarchy at all times. Sometimes it is necessary for her to howl, yell, hiss, and/or whack the other resident cats on the head for no apparent reason other than to remind them who is boss – who is head of the cat family. It is very important that she gets the first plate of food at eating time, as top cat she is entitled to eat first. Alpha female cats are happiest as the only cat in a household, or where other resident cats have mellow personalities. The majority are best suited to live with mellow males. Alpha females are also more likely to get over stimulated when petted.

Most experienced cat owners know to let the alpha female cat just be herself. After all, she's in charge of everything and that is a big responsibility.

### **Head Butts and Cheek Rubs**

Don't we all just love it when our feline pal awakens us in the middle of the night? Well, if your kitty uses a head butt (officially known as "bunting") to wake you up, or head butts you after you have opened your eyes...purrrrrhaps she wants you to know that she loves you. Well, that and it might be nice if you got up and gave her some food.

Head butting or bunting (not cheek or full body rubs) is one-way kitty shows her affection toward you. Bunting is one form of greeting. Another is the long, slow blinks we get when our cat looks at us. Try blinking slowly at your cat and see if she blinks back. I bet she will!



**Credit and thanks to [carenorthshore.org](http://carenorthshore.org).**

## Desensitization and Counterconditioning



WebMD Veterinary Reference from ASPCA Virtual Pet Behaviorist

Systematic desensitization and counterconditioning are two common treatments for fears, anxiety, phobias and aggression—basically any behavior problem that involves arousal or emotional reaction. When the problem is rooted in how a **dog** or **cat** feels about a particular thing, it isn't enough to just teach him a different behavior—like sit instead of lunge and growl. What's most effective is treatment that will change the way he feels about something. This treatment will eliminate the underlying reason for the behavior problem in the first place.

Desensitization and counterconditioning are treatments that were developed by psychologists. Usually done at the same time, these treatments are used to help both people and animals with fears and phobias. They're effective but somewhat complex. For animals, they involve patient training several times a day, progressing in small, carefully planned increments. It usually takes several months before results are seen.

Because treatment must progress and change according to the **pet**'s reactions, and because these reactions can be difficult to read and interpret, systematic desensitization and counterconditioning are most effective under the guidance of a trained professional, such as a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (CAAB or ACAAB) or a board-certified veterinary behaviorist (Dip ACVB). If you choose to hire a Certified Professional Dog Trainer (CPDT) because you can't find a behaviorist in your area, be sure that the trainer is qualified to help you. Determine whether she or he has education and experience using these treatments, since this expertise is not required for CPDT certification.

### Desensitization

Desensitization means to make less sensitive. Its goal is to eliminate or reduce the exaggerated, emotion-based reaction that an animal has to a specific thing—be it other animals, kinds of people (like children or men in uniform), certain places or events, or certain noises. Systematic desensitization is a structured plan. It involves a gradual process of exposing an animal to a less intense version of the thing or event he fears, in such a way that his fear isn't triggered.

Desensitization starts with showing or exposing an animal to a weak, less threatening version of the thing he fears or dislikes. We weaken the thing or event by making it smaller, slower, shorter lasting, farther away, less noisy, or still rather than moving. Over time, as the **pet** habituates at that low exposure, we gradually make the thing (person, animal, place, object, noise, event, etc.) stronger again by, for example, bringing it closer, increasing its volume or having it move. So a systematic desensitization plan starts with exposure to the least scary version of the feared thing and gradually moves to stronger versions until full or normal exposure is reached.

For example, let's say your **cat** is afraid of male visitors to your home. You might first expose your **cat** to a man who's far away and standing still—exposure that your cat notices but without feeling scared. Over time, you would gradually bring the man closer but still make him less threatening by asking him not to look directly at your cat and not to reach out toward her—something that, again, your cat can notice without fear. The final goal is to have your cat comfortable around men who are moving around normally in your house, close up and greeting, petting or playing with her.

## Counterconditioning

To “condition” means to teach, and to “counter” means to change. So counterconditioning just means to re-teach the pet to have a pleasant feeling and reaction toward something that he once feared or disliked. We do this by associating the feared thing with something good so that it predicts good things for the animal. As soon as the dog or cat sees the thing, we give him a delicious treat to create a pleasant emotional reaction. Over many repetitions, the animal learns that whenever that thing appears, good things happen! Eventually, the process produces a neutral or positive emotional reaction to the sight of the previously feared or disliked person, animal, event, place or object.

## Systematic Desensitization and Counterconditioning

Desensitization is often combined with counterconditioning because it's almost impossible to teach a positive association to something if the dog is actively experiencing fear or showing aggression. So we expose the animal to a weak version of the feared or disliked thing (desensitization), and give him delicious treats (counterconditioning). Over many exposures, the thing is gradually made stronger (for example, closer, louder or faster) and always followed immediately with treats.

### Steps for Your DSCC Plan

- Write down a description of the thing or event that your dog or cat fears. Include all its major relevant attributes, such as the way it moves, sounds, looks and smells, and how far it's away and how long it lasts. Relevant means only those attributes that seem to trigger your pet's fear or aggression. For example, if your dog fears children on skateboards, their smell may not be relevant, but their age, noises and distance could be.
- Now look at these attributes and identify when they're least and most threatening to your dog. For example, your dog may be slightly tense with skateboarding children at a distance, but once they're within 10 yards and the noise is louder, he reacts with defensively threatening behaviors like barking, lunging and snarling. Furthermore, if the child is also yelling, your dog is at his worst. Since your dog can't tell you how much he fears something, judge by your dog's past reactions, his body language and behavior.
- Now make a list of these attributes, ordered from least to most threatening. For example:
  - Child on skateboard in the distance, sound muffled
  - Child on skateboard at 20 yards, wheels getting loud
  - Child on skateboard within 10 yards, wheels louder
  - Child on skateboard, close up, wheels loudest
  - Child on skateboard, yelling, close up, wheels loudest
- Start your DSCC treatment with number 1, the least-threatening level of exposure for your dog. Other examples are if your pet fears a sound, you can expose him to controlled versions of the sound by playing tape recordings of it. Or you can expose your pet to the sight of something he fears without sound or movement. For instance, if the dog is afraid of men, keep the men far away and ask them to stand quiet and still.

### Guidelines for Your DSCC Plan

- Use treats that your pet values highly—treats that smell and taste wonderful. Ideally, this high-value treat should be something your pet has never tasted before. It could be croutons, cheese or chicken. Reserve this special treat for use only in your DSCC treatment plan.
- In brief, your sessions involve: 1) bringing the feared thing into sight, 2) treating your pet in a steady stream of pea-sized morsels as long as it's in sight, 3) then moving it out of sight (or moving you and your pet away), and 4) stopping the treats as soon as the feared thing is out

- of sight. Repeat this pattern of approaching and treating, then withdrawing and stopping treats at least 10 times each session.
- Try to end each session on success—when you notice that your pet is more relaxed, isn't at all worried, and has stopped even noticing the feared thing.
- Start each session at the same level of exposure that you ended on in your last session. You might find that he's back to being alert and a little worried about the feared thing. That's okay. Just keep repeating the gentle exposures with treats. Stay at that level as long as it takes for your pet to handle that level well—meaning he's unworried and relaxed. This may take many sessions across several days or weeks.
- Move on to the next exposure level on your list only when at the start of a session your cat or dog shows no worry and is relaxed and enjoying getting treats and playing with you in the presence of the thing. In a nutshell, don't start a new session at an exposure level that's higher than the last session.
- AVOID frightening your pet. Expose him to a tolerable version of the feared thing, without evoking any fear. If he shows fear, quickly increase the distance from the feared thing or otherwise reduce its intensity by reducing some part of it, such as its sound or movement.
- AVOID exposure to the scary thing between your treatment sessions. Ideally, your pet should not experience the thing at all except during treatment, when the exposure is controlled and you're actively counterconditioning with treats.
- Try to have longer rather than shorter sessions, like 10 minutes or longer.
- Vary the time of day of your sessions, the location of your sessions if possible, and the kind of treats you use. Avoid carrying your treats in a special bag, or, if you need to use a treat bag, carry that bag with you around the house sometimes, even when you aren't in a treatment session, and don't give any treats. This will help your pet learn the right association: that the feared thing predicts treats not that the appearance of the treat bag predicts treats.
- Once your dog or cat has overcome his fear and is comfortable with the normal version of the once-feared thing, do maintenance sessions at least twice a month to prevent the fear from returning.

### **Seek the Help of an Experienced Professional**

If your dog or cat suffers from fear, anxiety, phobia or aggression, consult with a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (CAAB or ACAAB) or a veterinary behaviorist (Dip ACVB). These experts can help you develop a DSCC treatment plan, guide you through the steps at the right pace, and troubleshoot plateaus or setbacks. Often, medication can help pets during the initial stages of systematic desensitization and counterconditioning. For advice on suitable medications, speak with a veterinary behaviorist or a CAAB, who can work with your veterinarian. Please see our article, [\*\*Finding Professional Help\*\*](#), to locate an applied animal behaviorist in your area.

WebMD Veterinary Reference from ASPCA Virtual Pet Behaviorist:

The ASPCA Virtual Pet Behaviorist specializes in the resolution and management of pet behavior problems only. Please do not submit questions about medical problems here. Only licensed veterinarians can diagnose medical conditions. If you think that your pet is sick, injured or experiencing any kind of physical distress, please contact his veterinarian immediately. A delay in seeking proper veterinary care may worsen your pet's condition and put his life at risk. If you are concerned about the cost of veterinary care, please read our resources on finding financial help.©

**Credit and thanks to aspca.org.**

## **Medical Care for Your Adopted Cat**

Regular professional veterinary care is essential to the health of your cat. Preventive veterinary care can add quality years to the life of your cat. Consider yourself, your cat, and your veterinarian and staff a team whose main goal is to keep your cat happy, healthy, and in a loving relationship with you for as long as possible.

Selecting a veterinarian is a personal decision. The best way to find a good veterinarian is to ask people who have the same approach to pet care as you do. Start with a recommendation from a friend, neighbor, co-worker, family member, dog trainer, groomer, boarding kennel employee, or pet sitter.

Once you have narrowed your search, schedule a visit to meet the staff, tour the facility, and learn about the animal center's philosophy and policies. This is a reasonable request that any veterinarian should be glad to oblige. Write down your questions ahead of time.

Here are of some of the things to consider when you make your initial visit.

- Is the facility clean, comfortable, and well-organized?
- Are appointments required?
- How many veterinarians are in the practice? Any cat specialists?
- Are there technicians or other professional staff members?
- Are dog and cat cages in separate areas?
- Is the staff caring, calm, competent, and courteous, and do they communicate effectively?
- Do the veterinarians have special interests such as geriatrics or behavior?
- Do fees fit your budget? Are discounts for senior citizens or multi-pet households available?
- Are x-rays, ultrasound, blood work, EKG, endoscopy, and other diagnostics done in-house or referred to a specialist?
- Which emergency services are available?
- Is location and parking convenient?

*Credit and thanks to [carenorthshore.org](http://carenorthshore.org).*

### **Local Emergency Medical Care**

**Insert your local info here**

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## **AAFP Pre-Vet Examination History and Checklist**

This may be used for routine (well visits) or non-routine/urgent visits to your cat's veterinarian. This is not an all-inclusive list but is helpful in describing your kitty's general health or the beginning of problems or concerns to the vet.

Pet's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

	No	Mild	Moderate	Severe	When did problem begin?
1) Weight gain _____ Weight loss _____					
2) Appetite: Increase _____ Decrease _____					
3) Vomiting _____ Diarrhea _____					
4) Constipation/difficult defecation					
5) Increased drinking _____ Increased Urine _____					
6) Lumps/tumors _____ Skin Problems _____ Describe: _____					
7) Bad breath / Sore gums / Difficult chewing					
8) Decreased awareness – gets confused/lost					
9) Housesoiling _____ Spraying _____ Describe: _____					
10) Decreased recognition of people, animals or previously learned commands Describe: _____					
11) Decreased affection / interaction with owners					
12) Chewing, licking, eating non-food items Describe: _____					
13) Increased irritability / aggression					
14) Increased fear / anxiety					
15) Decreased tolerance of handling					
16) Decreased hearing or "selective hearing"					
17) Repetitive behaviors e.g. pacing, overgrooming Describe: _____					
18) Decreased grooming or self care					
19) Muscle tremors / shaking					
20) Weakness / incoordination					
21) Difficulty climbing stairs / increased stiffness					
22) Decreased activity – sleeps more					
23) Excessive vocalization: Day _____ Night _____					
24) Waking owners at night					
Other problems / concerns:					
Medications:					
Existing Medical problems:					

**Credit and thanks to [carenorthshore.org](http://carenorthshore.org).**

## **AAFT Monthly Checklist for Your Senior Cat**

Review list with your vet and ask when he/she  
should like to be contacted regarding noticed changes.  
Always contact your vet immediately if there are sudden changes.

*Credit and thanks to carenorthshore.org.*

**Month 1 Month 2 Month 3 Month 4**

<b>My cat:</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
1) is acting normal - active and in good spirits				
2) does not tire easily with moderate exercise				
3) does not have seizures or fainting episodes				
4) has a normal appetite, with no significant weight change				
5) has a normal thirst and drinks the usual amount (approx. 1 oz. per pound per day or less)				
6) does not vomit or regurgitate undigested food				
7) has normal appearing bowel movements (firm/formed with no blood or mucus)				
8) urinates in usual amounts and frequently, color is normal				
9) always uses the litter box and there is no offensive household pet odor				
10) has no offensive habits (biting, digging, chewing, scratching, spraying)				
11) has gums that are pink with no redness, swelling, or bleeding				
12) has clean, white teeth, free from plaque, tartar or bad breath				
13) has a moist nose, free from discharge or sneezing				
14) has eyes that are bright, clear and free of discharge				
15) doesn't drag its bottom or chew itself excessively				
16) has a full, glossy coat with no missing hair, no mats or excessive shedding				
17) doesn't scratch, lick, or chew itself excessively				
18) has skin that is free from dry flakes, thinning haircoat, is not greasy, and has no bad odor				
19) is free from fleas, ticks, lice or mites				
20) has a body that is free from lumps/bumps				
21) has ears that are clean and odor free				
22) doesn't shake its head or scratch its ears				
23) has normal hearing and reacts as usual to its environment				
24) walks without stiffness, pain or difficulty				
25) has healthy looking feet and short nails				
26) breathes normally, without straining or coughing				

## Coping with Allergies

At least 1 in 3 cat owners has allergies to their feline companion. For many pet lovers, the benefits of animal companionship outweigh the drawbacks of allergy symptoms.

Yet, despite that statistic, cats are the most popular pet in America. There are ways to co-exist with your fluffy allergen.

First, it is important to note that cat allergies are triggered by a protein in the cat's skin, saliva, and urine and NOT by the hair itself. That said, cats do groom themselves several times during the day hence leaving tiny particles of this protein (called dander) on the fur. This becomes airborne when it dries, allowing it to be inhaled or stick to various surfaces in your home, including carpeting, furniture, walls and bedding. You may also find you are allergic to Siamese but not Persians, or orange tabbies but not black cats.

Be aware that kittens often do not cause allergic reactions until they become adults. You might want to consider an adult cat you do not react to rather than take a chance on a kitten only to find you are extremely sensitive to it when it grows up.

You should consult an allergist to determine if you are truly allergic to cats and/or other allergens. Generally, people who are allergic to one thing are allergic to several. Common allergens are pollen, mold, grass, trees, and dust mites. Allergies often work in combination, so exposure to one allergen can intensify your reaction to another. You may want to consider medications, immunotherapy (allergy shots), or simple housekeeping practices to reduce your exposure.

### **Top Ten (OK, 11) Tips for Coping with Allergies to Cats (or anything else for that matter)**

- Always have a "safe" room where you can retreat, generally your bedroom. Do not allow the cat in this room. Do NOT let the cat sleep on your bed!!! Keep an air purifier (ideally with a HEPA filter) in this room as well. Wash bedding in hot water (140°F) at least twice a month. This will also kill off dust mites (another big allergen).
- Thoroughly clean your home to remove cat allergens from carpets, drapes, upholstered furniture, walls. Vacuum often using a filter with a high allergy containment rating. You might want to consider replacing carpeting with hardwood flooring.
- Check with your veterinarian for products (such as Allerpet) to reduce dander. These can be wiped over the cat's fur. Or, try a microfiber cloth. If your cat is agreeable, you can try bathing your cat weekly. Sometimes wiping the cat with a cloth moistened with distilled water will do the trick.
- If possible, have someone who is non-allergic do the bathing/grooming. Restrict the grooming to an easy to clean room.
- Consult an allergist to help determine the most effective form of allergy control/treatment. Find a doctor who understands your commitment to your cat.
- Place allergen-impermeable covers on mattresses, box springs and pillows to prevent previously accumulated allergens from escaping and from allowing more allergens to be captured.
- Medications (over the counter and prescription).
- Allergy shots(immunotherapy).
- Use air purifiers with HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filters to help trap allergens.
- Ventilate the house frequently and keep furnaces, air ducts and air conditioner filters clean.
- Wash your hands after handling the cat...and do not touch your eyes!!

***Credit and thanks to hopalong.org.***

# 5 Cat Bite Infection Symptoms You Shouldn't Ignore



By [Kelly Roper](#) LoveToKnow Editor and Cat Fancier at <https://cats.lovetoknow.com/>



All cat bites, from little nips to deep punctures, can result in swelling and other symptoms. Learn how to spot the signs of a cat bite infections so you know when it's time to get medical help.

## Symptoms of Possible Complications of Cat Bites

Although both dog and cat saliva contain many types of bacteria, a person is more likely to get an infection from a [cat bite](#) than a dog bite. [Cats' teeth](#) are sharper and longer than their canine counterparts. [Cat bites generally produce](#) small, deep puncture wounds that are difficult to clean. According to [VCA Animal Hospitals](#), all cat bites should be seen by a doctor as soon as possible due to the high risk of infection. While mild infections cause slight discomfort, serious ones can be life-threatening.

## Infection from Cat Bites

[Health Guide Info](#) warns a cat bite [infection](#) can develop within 24 to 48 hours of being bitten.



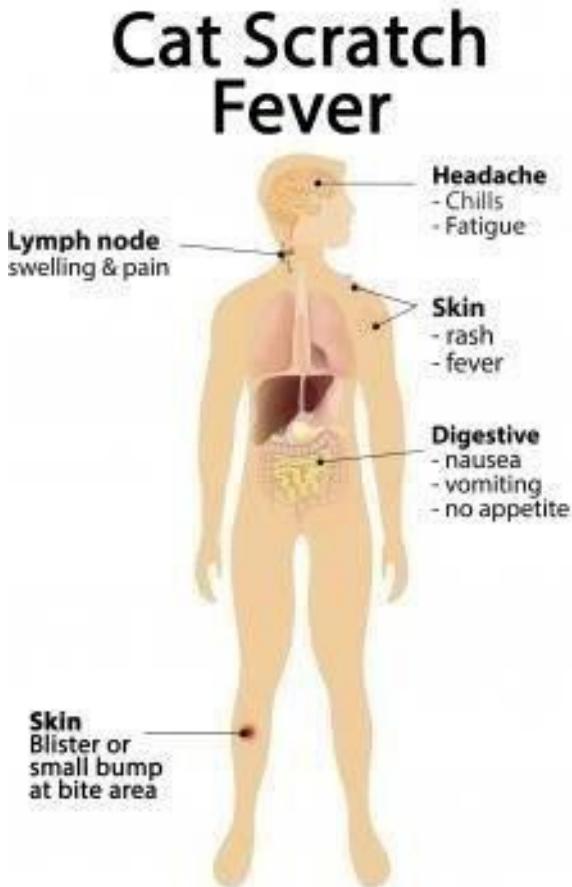
## Common Signs of Infection include:

- Redness: One of the first signs your bite may be getting infected is redness around the wound. This can vary from light pink to a dark, angry-looking crimson red. If the area is getting red, watch for any spreading of redness outward to the rest of the body. Spreading of redness could indicate blood poisoning.
- Heat: Whether or not the bite begins to redden, check it often to make sure it is not warmer than the other parts of your body. As your body sends antibodies to fight infection, the temperature around the infected area may heat up even before the area turns red.
- Odor: Some bites develop an unusual odor. It may be difficult to detect at first, but the wound may smell if untreated.
- Pus or oozing: An infected bite can abscess and puff up with a growth that looks like a pimple or boil. The growth will eventually pop and drain, but a doctor should examine the wound.
- Fever: This may develop if an infection is left untreated too long.

Health Guide Info lists headache, fatigue, low blood pressure and rapid heartbeat as additional symptoms of infection. Treatment generally consists of antibiotics and possibly a tetanus shot.

## Cat-Scratch Fever

Transmitted by a scratch or bite, [cat-scratch fever](#), also known as cat-scratch disease, is generally not serious in people with healthy immune systems. However, see your doctor if you develop symptoms. If you suffer from a compromised immune system due to an existing medical condition, you must seek medical attention if a cat bites you.



**According to [MedicineNet.com](#), symptoms include:**

- A blister or small bump (swelling) forming at the site of the bite
- Tenderness and swelling of the lymph nodes
- Fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Sore throat
- Rash
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Loss of appetite

Cat-scratch fever symptoms typically occur three to thirty days after the bite, with most cases developing in the first one to two weeks. Your doctor will most likely prescribe antibiotics. The illness usually lasts two to four months, but may last up to a year.<sup>1</sup>

### Treating a Cat Bite

**According to [Family Doctor](#), you can lower the chance of infection from a cat bite by taking these steps right away:**

- Wash your hands or put on rubber gloves before beginning treatment.
- If the bite is bleeding, apply direct pressure to the wound with a clean, dry cloth. Continue applying pressure until the bleeding stops.
- If the bite is not bleeding or is bleeding slightly, wash the area for several minutes with antibacterial soap and water. Use running water if possible.
- Rinse the wound thoroughly.
- Sterilize the area with [Betadine](#), or soak it in a solution of peroxide or Epsom salts and warm water.
- Apply an antibiotic ointment or cream, coating the area.
- Cover the bite with a sterile dressing.
- Watch the bite area over the next two days for any signs of infection.

### Take Every Cat Bite Seriously

Never make the mistake of ignoring a bite wound. Clean it properly and call your family doctor about having the bite examined. Getting bitten by a cat is a fairly common occurrence, but you still need to protect your health.

*Credit and thanks Kelly Roper for [catslovetoknow.com](#).*

# Cat Scratch Fever Symptoms and Treatment



By [Kelly Roper](#) LoveToKnow Editor and Cat Fancier at <https://cats.lovetoknow.com/>



Cat scratch fever, now called cat scratch disease (CSD), is not a serious illness for most people. However, it's good for anyone who comes in contact with cats to learn how to [recognize the symptoms](#) and the best way to treat them.

## Symptoms of Cat Scratch Disease

Cat scratch disease is usually contracted after being [scratched by a cat](#). On rare occasions, the disease is caused by being scratched by animals other than cats.

According to [Melissa Stoppler, MD](#), the symptoms of cat scratch disease start to appear three to thirty days after the scratch, but most commonly in one to two weeks. The symptoms may include:

- Pimples/nodules at the site of the scratch that last one to four weeks
- Swollen, tender lymph nodes
- Warm, red skin that lasts four to six weeks
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Fever (Develops in less than half of those infected)

The majority of people infected with cat scratch disease heal without needing any medication. Although most people recover in two to five months, it can take up to a year for the swelling to disappear completely from the lymph nodes.

## Is Cat Scratch Fever Dangerous?

While the risk from [cat scratch fever](#) is small, it still can have severe effects for some people. The [CDC](#) [believes](#) approximately 4% of people who contract the disease end up in the hospital. The disease can lead to serious secondary infections such as [encephalitis](#), [endocarditis](#), and [osteomyelitis](#). People more likely to be susceptible to severe complications from cat scratch fever are ones with a compromised or a [weakened immune system](#) such as young children under five years old or [people with HIV](#), cancer, diabetes or a recent organ transplant. There is also some concern that cat scratch fever can cause complications for pregnant women, including [miscarriage](#), but research results so far [are inconclusive](#).

## Misunderstood Disease

Cat scratch fever is not a particularly dangerous illness for most people, and the symptoms are usually very mild. Sadly, many people have been led to believe that cat scratches are dangerous to children and can even cause death. Most illnesses that children are exposed to at school, day care and other activities are far more harmful and dangerous. As a result of this unfounded fear of cat scratches, parents may have cats [declawed](#), refuse to let their children have cats as pets, or get rid of the family cat after any minor incident.

## Treatment



If you or your child is scratched, treat it like any other minor wound. According to [FamilyDoctor.org](#), you should:

- Rinse the scratch thoroughly with cool water
- Gently pat it dry
- Apply an antibiotic ointment or cover the scratch with a bandage if it's in an area that's like to get dirty or rubbed
- Take a pain reliever to reduce any fever or discomfort
- Ask your doctor about draining any particularly painful lymph nodes

Using alcohol or peroxide is generally not recommended because both can increase inflammation. The scratch should heal in a few days. If symptoms such as fever or swollen lymph nodes do appear, see a doctor to rule out other, possibly serious, illnesses. Cat scratch disease does not require medical attention, but you do not want to overlook a dangerous illness by assuming that the symptoms are related to the cat scratch.

## Treatment for More Serious Cases

Sometimes a CSD infection can become more serious, especially when it's contracted by a person who already has a compromised immune system due to HIV infection or an autoimmune disorder. According to [EMedicineHealth](#), infections that are more serious are usually treated with an antibiotic such as azithromycin, gentamicin, doxycycline, and ciprofloxacin.

## Take Precautions, But Don't Worry

Bottom line, CSD doesn't appear to have a serious effect on the majority of people who contract it, and washing a scratch and treating it with some antibiotic ointment and a bandage is usually enough to keep an infection from getting out of hand. People with suppressed immune systems, pregnant women, and young children should take the added precaution of seeking advice from their physicians and following any treatment plan prescribed.

**Credit and thanks to Kelly Roper for [catslovetoknow.com](#).**

# Pet Links & Resources

American Association for Feline Practitioners

[www.catvets.com](http://www.catvets.com)

American Veterinary Medical Association

[www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org)

American Animal Hospital Association

[www.aaha.org](http://www.aaha.org)

American Board of Veterinary Practitioners

[www.abvp.com](http://www.abvp.com)

American College of Veterinary Dentists

[www.avdc.org](http://www.avdc.org)

American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine

[www.acvim.org](http://www.acvim.org)

American College of Veterinary Nutrition

[www.acvn.org](http://www.acvn.org)

American Heartworm Society

[www.heartwormsociety.org/pet-owner-resources](http://www.heartwormsociety.org/pet-owner-resources)

ASPCA's Poison Control Center

[www.aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control](http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control)

ASPCA's 101 Household Pet Dangers

<https://www.aspcapetinsurance.com/101-things-you-didnt-know-could-harm-your-pet/>

Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges

[www.aavmc.org](http://www.aavmc.org)

Agility Information

[www.cleanrun.com](http://www.cleanrun.com)

Bring Fido – Search your area for Pet-friendly Destinations!

[www.bringfido.com](http://www.bringfido.com)

Cat Vets

[https://www.cavd.ca/images/CAVD\\_Illustrated\\_Diet\\_Trial\\_Handout\\_for\\_Cats.pdf](https://www.cavd.ca/images/CAVD_Illustrated_Diet_Trial_Handout_for_Cats.pdf)

Center for Veterinary Medicine- U.S. Food and Drug Administration

[www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/](http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/)

Cornell Feline Health Center

[www.vet.cornell.edu/fhc/](http://www.vet.cornell.edu/fhc/)

Pawlicy Advisor (Pet Insurance Recommendations)

[www.pawlicy.com](http://www.pawlicy.com)

Pet Insurance Review

[www.petinsurancereview.com](http://www.petinsurancereview.com)

Pet Loss Support – Provided by the Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement

[www.aplb.org](http://www.aplb.org)

Pura Pride Preserve Inc. a pet advocate welfare organization to help you connect with other feline resources in the feline ecosystem.

<https://purapride.org>

Veterinary Partner, a service of Veterinary Information Network

[www.veterinarianpartner.com](http://www.veterinarianpartner.com)