

Keeping Your Cat Indoors



Why should I keep my cat indoors?

Making the decision to keep your cat indoors can be a difficult one, but it may be the best choice you can make for your cat. By keeping your cat indoors, you virtually eliminate the most common threats your cat is exposed to. When allowed outside, your cat is in danger of becoming lost, injured by other animals, hit by a car, attacked by humans, ingesting poisons and at risk of becoming infected by serious diseases and parasites.

What does my cat need to live indoors?

Cats have several requirements for living a healthy life indoors. Each cat and family situation is unique; this information is intended for you to use as a basic set of guidelines to help you find the ideal living environment for you and your cat.

- **Fresh food and water** – For multiple cat households, a separate set of food and water bowls should be placed in different areas of the house to avoid conflicts at meal time.
- **Litter boxes** – The number of litter boxes needed is dependent upon how many cats are in the household. The golden rule is one litter box per cat plus one more. Litter boxes should be kept clean and arranged for easy access in several areas of the house. In general, cats prefer large, open litter boxes with fine grained, unscented litter.
- **Scratching posts and climbing structures** – They provide your cat with an appropriate outlet for his or her natural scratching instinct. Giving them a variety of rough materials in both horizontal and vertical positions in varying heights will not only keep your cat entertained, but will save your furniture and carpet from unwanted destructive behaviors.
- **Toys** – Make time each day to play with your cat using interactive toys such as feather teasers and laser pointers to encourage your cat to “hunt.” Giving your cat a variety of different toys to choose from will keep your cat stimulated, as well as help you to identify preferred play objects. Be aware that normal household objects and decorations may be dangerous to cats. Cats love to chase and play with string or ribbon but have been known to swallow them which can cause serious illness or even death.
- **Personal space** – Elevated perches can provide cats with the perfect getaway retreat. Cats prefer a place of solitude where they can be undisturbed by others and feel safe from a potential threat. Natural instinct is to seek “higher ground” for safety and to monitor traffic in the household.
- **Educated owners** – Cats, unlike dogs, are not “pack animals” and require different methods for training. Cats are more likely to respond to treats and affection for performing wanted and encouraged behaviors.
- **Preventive care** – A must for indoor cats. Even though the risk of disease exposure is greatly diminished, the possibility of your cat getting outside and coming into contact with disease is still there. A comprehensive physical examination performed twice yearly by your veterinarian is important to maintain optimum health and to manage any problems before they become serious.

For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.

How do I make my outdoor cat an indoor cat?

Begin by giving your cat a sanctuary, preferably in a quiet room away from the general living areas. Your cat's new refuge should include places to hide such as cardboard boxes, paper bags, cat beds and perches. This will be your cat's new home until your cat is comfortable enough to venture out into the rest of the house. Remember to keep all of the potential exits of your home closed; cats that have grown accustomed to being outdoors will try to get outside again. To discourage your cat's strong desire to get out, you can take steps to make the doors seem less appealing by using a squirt bottle, rattling a can containing pennies, or using a citrus scented spray near the doorways.

The use of man-made facial pheromone sprays and diffusers may also help your cat to adjust to the new environment. Since the pheromone mimics the natural chemical that cats deposit when rubbing their face on you or your furniture to mark territory, it tells your cat that it's a safe place.

Will my cat be happy indoors?

With a balanced environment and plenty of stimulating activity, your cat will live a long, happy and healthy life indoors. If you'd like your cat to enjoy outdoor time, you can use a harness and enjoy leash walks. This does take patience and training to achieve.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact your Banfield veterinarian.

