



The Great Indoors

People often have a romantic idea about a cat's life outdoors, however, the reality is that nationwide, cats who get lost outdoors less than 2% make it back home. The idea that a needs/should be allowed outside for their healthy is a myth. Playing regularly with your cat can easily satisfy his need for stalking, keeps him mentally stimulated, and provides exercise. In fact, the indoor cat that gets lots of attention and playtime is likely to be happier than the indoor-outdoor cat that is generally ignored by his humane guardians.

Your indoor cat is never exposed to:

- Injury or death by: vehicles, fighting with other cats, dogs or predators
- Poisoned intentionally or accidentally
- Rabies - more cats get rabies every year than dogs and generally die within 3-4 days
- FiV - Feline Immunodeficiency Virus results in a lowered immune system; there is no cure
- FeLV - Feline Leukemia Virus also affects a cats' immune system. Cats with FeLV can die within a few months or survive for 3-4yrs.
- FiP - Feline Infectious Peritonitis, it comes in two forms:
 - Wet form: attacks your cats' body very rapidly, filling the abdominal cavity with fluid; cats often die within 2 months of showing signs
 - Dry form: not nearly as aggressive and cats can expect to for quite some time after showing symptoms. It generally attacks the liver, kidneys, and central nervous system.
- Parasites like fleas, ticks, ringworms, roundworms— not to mention they will be in your house too!
- Getting lost and/or being picked-up by animal control (shelter death is the #1 cause of pet deaths in the US)
- Theft for sale as laboratory animals or "bait" in illicit gaming
- Not to mention sadist people often burn or shoot cats just for fun
- Problems with neighbors (not everyone wants to clean-up your cats' messes in their flowers)

Everything your cat needs - play, exercise, a good diet, rest, and companionship - can be had readily, indoors. There really are no pros to letting your cat roam outside, only negatives. Now that you understand the importance of keeping your cat indoors, how do you keep that cat happy and healthy?

Cat trees, cat furniture, scratching posts can be purchased or made to keep your kitty healthy and well-exercised. These items satisfy the need to: exercise/run, climb, be high, and scratch – not to mention and just plain fun!

Purchase toys for your cat to play with solo and with you. Items like fuzzy mice or crinkle balls are great to bat around the house. Try wand toys or laser pointers to play with your cat. There are also many toys on the market that are "puzzle toys;" these toys involve using their brains to get food or treat and are excellent mental stimulation toys.

The consensus among veterinarians and organizations, such as the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), is that it's wiser to keep cats indoors. Considering the potential dangers outdoors, an indoor lifestyle is much safer for cats.



5 Reasons You Might Let Your Cat Out, And Why Not To

Many people still let their cats outdoors - often with misplaced good intentions. Here are some of the most common reasons people let their cats outside, and safer, indoor alternatives.

Myth 1: Indoor cats get bored.

Fact: The truth is, indoor cats can and do get bored, but letting them outside is not a good solution.

Instead, make your home more interesting: Set up perches where he can watch birds from the safety of inside, build a DIY cat playhouse, hide his food or modify his feeder so he has to "hunt" for it. (Find more suggestions by searching for environmental-enrichment for cats) Finally, if your cat is amenable to it, you might consider adopting a second cat as a playmate.

Myth 2: Indoor cats are overweight.

Fact: If your cat is overweight, the safest way to help her trim down is by combining portion control and a daily exercise and play routine.

Stop free-feeding your cat, or at least be mindful only to feed a healthy amount per day. (Yes, cats do overeat. You can consult your vet about how many calories your cat should be eating in a day.)

Cats love a schedule. Try feeding him at the same times each day and he'll get used to the routine quickly. (Just remember to consult your veterinarian before starting any new feeding or weight-loss routines.)

Myth 3: Indoor cats are destructive.

Fact: Destructive behavior is often a sign that something else is going on. Is your cat sick? Bored? A talk with your vet or a behaviorist may be in order. Solving the problem might be simpler than you think.

Myth 4: My cat's always been allowed outside, so he can't be indoor-only.

Fact: Many cats have successfully gone from outdoor-only or indoor/outdoor to indoor-only. The key, again, is making sure the indoor environment is just as interesting as outside — and being vigilant about preventing escape attempts.

Myth 5: My cat is safe when he goes outside because he stays close to my home.

Fact: A study of 10 house cats and seven farm cats published in the European ecology journal *Ecography* found that on average, the house cats covered more ground than the farm cats - at night, the house cats moved within an average area of nearly 20 acres, compared to just over 6 acres for the farm cats.

A lot can happen even within a small radius of your home, so if you really want to let your cat outside, consider harness training him or creating a screened-in enclosure for him.