

Basic Cat Care

11.18.2018

Feeding

Purchase a high quality, nutritious cat food at a pet food store. Your veterinarian may help you determine the best diet for your cat. Cats require taurine, an essential amino acid, for their heart and eye health. All properly balanced cat foods will contain taurine. Look for foods in which meat, meat by-products, or seafood are listed among the first few ingredients. The amount that your cat should eat daily depends on their age and lifestyle. Discuss how much is recommended with your veterinarian. They may eat designated meals or “free feed” throughout the day. Cats should have access to clean, fresh water at all times. Wash your cat’s food and water bowls often, if not daily. Treats are fine to give your cat but should not exceed more than 5-10% of your cat’s diet. Treats should not be made up of raw meat, fish, table scraps, or milk. These types of foods can potentially cause illness and stomach upset.

Grooming and Handling

Most cats are natural self-groomers and stay relatively clean. Rarely should you need to give your cat a bath, but you should brush or comb your cat regularly to help keep your cat’s coat clean, reduce shedding, and help reduce hairballs. Don’t forget to check your cat’s ears often for wax, debris, and infection. Trim your cat’s nails as needed, usually once to twice a month.

Housing and Shelter

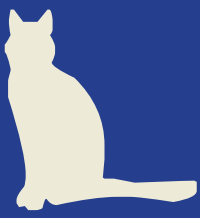
Your cat should have a private place in your home to sleep or rest. It is best to keep your cats indoors. Outdoor cats do not live as long as indoor cats and are more at risk for trauma and contact with infectious diseases. If your cat does go outdoors, it is highly recommended that they have access to clean water and protection from the outdoor elements. Check your local laws and ordinances on keeping a cat outdoors. Some ordinances require cats to be indoors under certain weather conditions.

Identification

All domesticated pets, including your indoor cat should wear an identification tag on a safety breakaway collar. A safety breakaway collar has elastic or a quick release to allow your cat to break loose if the collar gets caught on something. An ID tag in addition to a rabies tag may be required by law in some areas. Get your pet microchipped; an implanted microchip is an ID that your pet can’t lose. This will better ensure your cat is returned home if she becomes lost.

Litter Box

All indoor cats need at least 1 litter box per cat, plus 1 per level of the house. The box should be located in a quiet, accessible space. Keep the litter box clean by scooping daily and exchanging the litter at least once to twice weekly. Litter box problems are the number one behavior problem reported of cats. Consult with your veterinarian or a cat behavior expert if your cat is experiencing litter box problems.



Basic Cat Care continued...

11.09.2018

Scratching

Scratching is a normal cat behavior; all cats need to scratch! Scratching helps the cat remove the old outer nail sheath, exposing the smooth but sharp nail underneath. Trimming your cats nails regularly will help keep the nails blunt and less likely to harm arms and often furniture. Always provide your cat with scratching posts or pads. Use a variety of materials, such as sisal rope, burlap, tree bark, scratch pads, corrugated cardboard scratch pads, or carpeted posts.

Health and Wellness

All young and adult cats should visit the veterinarian at least once a year for an annual wellness examination and vaccinations. Senior cats may need to visit the vet more often. It is recommended that your cat be on regular flea prevention. Cats often mask illness to hide any weakness, so be sure to take your cat to the vet as soon as she appears sick or injured. Take an extra safety step and enroll in a pet CPR and first aid class to be better prepared to help pets in emergency situations.

Spaying and Neutering

At many clinics, a cat can be spayed or neutered as early as 2 months of age or whenever the cat reaches a weight of 2 pounds. Most pet parents wait until the cat is 5 to 6 months, around the start of a cat's sexual maturity to spay or neuter. Spaying or neutering your cat will help control the pet homelessness crisis in the United States. There are also medical and behavioral benefits to spaying and neutering your animals. Spaying and neutering prevents many cancers, infections, and even tumors.

Vaccinations

Consult with your veterinarian to determine which vaccines your cat should get based on the cat's health, age, and lifestyle. For cats, the core vaccinations recommended are: panleukopenia (feline distemper), feline calicivirus, feline herpesvirus type 1 (rhinotracheitis), and rabies. Other vaccines given to cats depending on the cat's lifestyle are: feline leukemia virus, Bordetella bronchiseptica, chlamydomyces felis, and feline immunodeficiency virus.

Cat Supply Checklist

- High quality cat food
 - Food and water dishes
 - Interactive toys
 - Brush or comb
 - Cat toothbrush and cat toothpaste
 - Breakaway safety cat collar
 - Identification tag and Rabies tag for collar
 - Scratching post or scratching pad
 - Litter box, litter scoop, and clumping litter
 - Cat bed or blanket
 - Small pet carrier
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