

Keep Your Kitties Safe and Happy Indoors

It's a common belief that cats should be outdoors. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Outdoor cats are exposed to threats of all types, including being hit by cars, attacked by other animals, ingesting poison such as antifreeze, and even attacks by people. They are also exposed to diseases and parasites.

Outdoor cats live only a few years, compared to indoor cats which can easily live a contented, full life into their teens. Many indoor cats even live into their twenties!

There are few things more distressing than listening to a well-meaning cat owner whose has just lost their beloved pet (run over by a car, killed by another animal or person). They let their cat outside because the cat "really wanted to go" and they "didn't have the heart to keep them inside".

... But you're not doing your cat a favor by letting him or her outside. They will be much safer and happier indoors.

Help Your Cat Adjust to Being Indoors By ...

Purchasing toys and catnip. This will help to distract your feline from the lure of the outdoors. Play with your cat and make indoors seem like a happy place. He may cry to go out, but do not give in. Rotate the toys so he has access to only a few, different toys each week.

Use Food Puzzles or hide food/treats so your pet has to work for his breakfast and dinner. Food puzzles can be purchased online and are a great way to give your cat something fun and exciting to do every day.

Get a litter box, if you don't already have one. Outdoor cats may be used to digging in the dirt to do their business. Help your cat by gathering some dirt or sand from your yard and putting a few inches in the litter box. Place the litter box in an easily accessible spot. Gradually mix the dirt with kitty litter. You eventually want to be using kitty litter only.

Note: Be sure to clean the litter box daily. Cats are naturally clean creatures, and you want to encourage them to use the litter box. If it's too dirty, your cat may decide to go elsewhere in the house (uh oh!). Ask your veterinarian for a list of hygiene and location rules that will help your kitty think "inside the box" at all times.

Think about introducing a harness or outdoor enclosure (look online for these). Cats can be quite content outside on a harness and a leash, basking in the sun. Do not use a collar; cats are clever little escape artists and may slip free. Outdoor enclosures that are closed on all sides as well as on top are another alternative. If you live in a remote area, you should keep an eye out for your cat as wild animals may attempt to break in.

Be alert! Your crafty cat may try to sneak by you whenever someone opens the door. Keep an eye out.

Make sure your cat has permanent identification. Hopefully you'll never have to use their ID, but just in case, always be sure your cat is wearing an ID tag (with the most up-to-date information on file), and a has a microchip implanted by your veterinarian.

Be patient! It can take a while for both you and your cat to adjust to his new indoor life. He may yowl at the door to go outside, but be firm. Do not even allow him within a five foot perimeter of the doors.

It's well worth the effort to reform an outdoor cat to the indoors. Your cat will lead a much safer, longer, and happier life with you.