



A Safe Cat is a Happy Cat

Keeping Your Cat Indoors

When you adopt a cat, you commit to providing a good home to the cat by keeping them healthy and safe. The only way you can truly do this is by keeping your cat indoors. Cats are domesticated animals that rely on their human caregivers to love and protect them. The benefits of keeping cats indoors are many; the disadvantages are none.

The statistics speak for themselves: Indoor cats live an average of 12.5 years. Cats that roam free outside live an average of only 2-5 years, which reflects the precarious environment that outdoor cats face. Cats that are allowed outside are at risk of:

- ❧ Getting lost and never being found.
- ❧ Being struck by a vehicle and left to suffer from injuries or die by the side of the road.
- ❧ Being attacked by unfriendly dogs, wildlife, or other cats defending their territory.
- ❧ Facing an angry property owner who does not appreciate cats in their yard or garden.
- ❧ Contracting diseases such as feline leukemia or illnesses that they can pass on to humans, such as rabies or toxoplasmosis.
- ❧ Picking up fleas, ticks or other parasites.
- ❧ Becoming sick from eating garbage, poisons, rodents, birds or toxic plants.
- ❧ Exposure to the harsh Canadian weather, with risk of frostbite in the winter and dehydration in the summer.
- ❧ Injury or death from crawling under or inside a vehicle.

Roaming cats that are not spayed or neutered also contribute to cat overpopulation. The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies estimates that 50,000 cats are euthanized in Canadian animal shelters every year; many are former pets who became strays after wandering away from home, or are the offspring of roaming cats.

To help ensure your indoor cat lives a happy life, not just a long one, improve their indoor environment by:

- ❧ Providing scratching posts or boxes so they can exercise their claws without damaging your furniture. Remember to also trim your cat's claws regularly.
- ❧ Giving them a place to perch up high, such as a sofa by a window, a window ledge, a shelf, or a cat tree.
- ❧ Turning your windows into a cat movie theatre by setting up a bird feeder nearby.
- ❧ Letting your cat try out different toys until you find the type they like best. Engaging your cat in play will help them get exercise while being entertained.
- ❧ Adding a second cat to your household for companionship, especially if you are gone from the home for long hours.
- ❧ Cleaning your cat's litter box daily and providing one litter box per cat.
- ❧ Bringing the outdoors in by growing some cat grass in a pot for your cat to eat once the grass is grown.
- ❧ If you have a screened in porch or enclosed balcony, letting your cat spend some time there to get some fresh air. Alternately, consider building or purchasing an outdoor access enclosure for your cat.
- ❧ Training your cat to use a leash and harness.

If your cat has become used to being allowed outdoors, you can help them become an indoor cat by following the suggestions above for creating a fun indoor environment. The easiest time to begin keeping an outdoor cat indoors is in the late fall, when the outside world is a bit less exciting to a cat. Once you have made the decision to keep your cat inside, stick to it, and be prepared to endure their persistent meowed objections. Letting them out for even a short time will only make the transition more difficult.