

Owning cats is great fun and very rewarding, but it is a big responsibility and a long-term commitment. Did you know cats live on average 15-18 years, but can live well into their 20s?

Providing for all your cat's needs is the best way of ensuring their physical and mental wellbeing, resulting in a long, healthy life. Here are some guidelines for offering your cat the best care:



Provide a suitable and stimulating living environment



Unless the cat you are looking to adopt has medical needs that require them to live indoors, we ask that cats have access to a garden or outdoor space to explore in. Cats are used to having large territories and can become frustrated and bored if kept confined indoors. Some cats will have more road sense than others so if you live near a road, we may recommend a more road-savvy cat for you.

Freedom of choice is very important to any animal's welfare, so we would recommend providing a cat flap to allow your cat to come and go as they please. If you have problems with other cats coming into your home, you can provide a microchip operated cat flap that will only open for your cat's unique microchip.

Cats will need to be provided with at least two litter trays (even if they go outdoors). These will need to be cleaned daily as cats are very fastidious and won't use a dirty litter tray. Make sure the litter trays are in a quiet area of the house, so they have some peace and quiet when toileting.

Is your property rented? If so, we will need to see permission from your landlord that you are allowed to keep cats.



Preserve their health by protecting them from pain, injury and disease



It is important to register your cat at a vet and take them for annual health checks.

They need annual vaccinations to protect against Feline Panleukopenia/Infectious Enteritis, Feline Herpes Virus, Feline Calicivirus and three yearly vaccinations against Feline Leukaemia Virus.

Cats need regular protection against parasites. They require monthly flea prevention and will need worming every few months (frequency will depend on whether or not they hunt).

It is a good idea to carry out regular health checks at home. Ensure their eyes, nose and mouth are clean and free from discharge. Check their ears to see if they are clean. Brush their coat to check for any lumps and bumps and ensure their skin is healthy with no wounds or flakiness.

Monitoring their toilet habits is another good way to keep an eye on their health. A cat that is constantly going to their litter tray or struggling to toilet will need a vet check-up.



Provide a nutritious diet and fresh water



Did you know? Cats are obligate carnivores, which means they need to eat meat to survive.

We recommend feeding a mix of high quality wet and dry food. Wet food has a higher water content which helps maintain kidney function. Whereas dry food can help improve their dental health.

When choosing a cat food look for something that is “complete” as this means it will contain all the vital vitamins and minerals. It should be high in protein, avoid foods containing high levels of carbohydrate or containing artificial colourings.

Cats prefer several smaller meals throughout the day rather than one large meal. Try and space out their mealtimes, this also stops them eating too quickly.

Cats dislike their whiskers touching the edges of a bowl so try to use a shallow food dish.

Why not try using a puzzle feeder instead of a bowl as this will make your cat work for their food and keep them entertained for longer?

Cats need access to clean, fresh water. They prefer to have their water bowl in a different location to their food. Some cats love running water, you can provide them with a water fountain, although some may prefer your kitchen tap!



Promote natural behaviour and provide appropriate companionship



It's a good idea to provide your cat with plenty of places to have a nap, some prefer being higher up, such as the top of a cat tree or wardrobe, others may prefer a small, cosy space such as under the bed. It's a good idea to give them lots of choice, and ensure they always have somewhere quiet to retreat to if they don't want to be disturbed.

We recommend leaving their cat carrier out at all times, just remove the door, put a blanket in and it becomes a safe place for a snooze. This also gets them used to their carrier so when it's time for the vet they aren't as stressed by it.

Provide scratch posts to save them from scratching your furniture and to help keep their claws trim. You can spray them with cat nip to encourage them to use them.

Cats, particularly younger ones, enjoy playing with toys. Toys that mimic hunting are perfect; fishing rod toys, soft mice, ping pong balls – all things that move and are exciting; playing is a great way to bond with your cat.

Some cats love company, if you have multiple cats in your home, it's important to ensure you have enough resources for everyone. Make sure you have multiple litter trays, beds, scratch posts, toys, feeding areas and water bowls.