

A Happy Healthy Cat - Part 1

Cats can be easy to keep, but to have a truly happy, healthy cat requires attention to details. These details include:

- Food and how it is offered
- Regular check-ups
- Things to do and think about
- Time with their people and other animals

Food for thought

In the wild, cats eat 10-20 small meals per day which they have hunted down and worked for. Our pet cats have the task of moving from their best nap spot to the heaping food dish. To promote activity, consider having little stashes of food here and there so your cat can practice their ancient foraging skills. Be sure to offer the highest quality food you can as another way to help keep your cat healthy.

Health Checks

Cats are great at hiding problems. That's the way nature has made them. Routine check ups help find problems while they are small and lets us know what is normal for YOUR cat. We can monitor trends in weight, behavior, coat quality, teeth, and movement, as well as offering screening tests to find those "hidden" problems.

Environment

Cats like to be high, that is, high up on counters, shelves, cat trees or platforms. Provide as many ways as possible for your cats to do this. Also offer places to scratch. Even declawed cats like to reach up and stretch out. Experiment with posts covered with carpet, (fluffy side or backing side out), rope or cardboard. The best place for scratching posts is right by the best napping spot. Some cats prefer posts that are laying flat.

Social Time

We tend to think of cats as wanting to be left alone. Most cats, though, enjoy spending time with *their* people and other family pets. This can be play time, groom time or just hang out time. Rotate new toys with old toys so they always seem fresh. It doesn't have to be fancy; a paper sack will do nicely. Or make puzzles, such as a cardboard box with holes cut into it and treats or toys inside.

A Happy Healthy Cat - Part 2

Litter Boxes

The subject of litter boxes deserves a column all its own. More cats lose their homes due to litter box issues than any other reason. Here is a list of cat recommended tips.

- Have at least one more litter box than you have cats
- Space the boxes in various places around the house, in quiet, low traffic areas.
- Use fine grain clumping litter without added fragrance.
- The size of the box needs to be at least 1.5 times the length of the cat (sweater boxes make good cat boxes.)
- If your kitty is older or has joint problems, have at least one side of the box edge lower for easy in, easy out.
- Scoop the boxes **every single day**, twice is even better.
- Scrub the box regularly with mild dish detergent, dry completely and replace with all fresh litter
- Uncovered boxes are better. (In nature, cats do not choose to go into caves to eliminate. Avoid the dark, stinky litter box.)

An interesting tidbit - Normal cats spend more than 4 seconds scratching in their litter box. A cat that scratches less than 4 seconds may have issues with appropriate litter box use. Please let us help if you and your cat are experiencing trouble. And always remember, it could be a health problem.