



## Keep Your Cat Indoors

Millions of cats suffer and die in the United States each year because they are allowed to roam outdoors. Many people believe that cats are happiest when roaming outside, when in fact, cats are likely to die prematurely from diseases, poisons, speeding vehicles and abuse by humans.

The Wisconsin Humane Society strongly recommends that you keep your cat indoors. Even cats in "safe" suburban neighborhoods can be victimized and never return home. Outdoor cats have a much shorter life span than those who live indoors. The life span of a free-roaming cat is short, compared to 15–18 years for the average indoor-only cat.

## Home Is the Best Habitat

Keep your cat safe and happy by making the indoors interesting and comfortable. There are lots of things that you and your cat can do together for fun—and you will have longer to enjoy one another, if you keep your cat safely confined in his natural habitat, the home you share. From catnip balls, cat grass and toys to physically and mentally challenge your cat, there is a large variety of products available to keep cats occupied indoors.

## Bringing an Outside Cat Indoors

What if your cat is already used to being allowed outside? Transforming a free-roaming cat into an indoor cat can be done, but it does require planning, persistence and patience. The key is to make the change from outdoors to indoors gradually, until the new way of life becomes old hat. Many cats adjust with minimal effort; others will be miserable for a while and let you know it. They may scratch at doors, claw at windows, yowl and try to dash through open doors. Here are some tips to help you and Mr. Whiskers:

- *If your cat has never used a scratching post or a litter box, introduce both items before transitioning your cat to life inside.*
- *If feeding your cat outdoors, begin feeding him inside.*
- *Some former free-roamers will appreciate "kitty greens" for them to munch on instead of your houseplants. Try planting grass, alfalfa, catnip, wheat or oat grass in indoor pots instead.*
- *If you live in a climate that has cold winters, that season may be the perfect time to transition your cat to a life indoors.*
- *If you're having trouble slowly transitioning your cat indoors, it may be better to go "cold turkey." Your veterinarian may prescribe a short-term drug or homeopathic therapy to help your cat through the transition period.*

By providing for your indoor cat's physical and emotional needs, you can create a safe and stimulating environment. A few toys, a cat's vivid imagination, and your caring attitude will go a long way toward keeping you and your cat safe and young at heart. If you would like to work with a Wisconsin Humane Society behaviorist one-on-one, please call 414-431-8173 to schedule a consultation.

*The mission of the Wisconsin Humane Society is to build a community where people value animals and treat them with respect and kindness.*

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