



Cats

Indoor or Outdoor

By allowing your cat outdoors, you are dramatically shortening your cat's lifespan. Free-roaming cats typically live three to five years less, whereas cats kept exclusively indoors often live to 15 years of age or more.

Before you let your cat outdoors, please consider the risks:

Cars

Automobiles are the number one killer of cats. Approximately half of all free-roaming cats will meet their death under the wheels of an automobile. Eighty percent of all major traumas to cats seen at emergency clinics are the results of being hit by a car. Also, many cats will climb into car engines on cold days to keep warm. Needless to say, this can be fatal to your cat should the car owner not realize the cat is there.

Disease

Free-roaming cats are exposed to many diseases. Among these, Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV), Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP), and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) have no cure and are generally fatal. All of these diseases are transmittable from other cats.

Poisons

Cats can find poisonous chemical as close as your own front yard. Common poisons include mouse and rat bait, certain lawn fertilizers, and antifreeze. Numerous other deadly chemicals are found in garages and sheds accessible to free-roaming cats.

Other Animals

Many cats that venture outdoors are attacked on their own property by other free-roaming animals. Raccoons, coyotes, dogs, and skunks have all been known to attack and kill domestic cats.

Parasites

Fleas can cause anemia, skin irritations, tapeworms, and allergies in cats. Ticks can cause Lyme disease. These parasites also pose risks to humans since they can transmit diseases through their bites. Additionally, ridding the home of these parasites can be difficult and costly.

Injury

Outdoor cats can suffer torn ears, hurt eyes, abscesses, broken bones, and numerous other injuries. An injured cat may not be able to make it back home. A survey by *Cat Fancy* magazine shows 75% of injuries occur outdoors. In addition, more than 100,000 cats are caught in "leg hold" traps each year. Those who aren't killed instantly can suffer for days and often lose limbs from injuries sustained while in the trap.

Human Abuse

Animal care and control agencies often reply to situations in which cats have been burned, stabbed, or hurt by other means. Free-roaming cats are also susceptible to theft. Oftentimes neighbors annoyed by damage to their car, house, or garden caused by free-roaming cats will catch the cats and release them in other neighborhoods or surrender them to the local animal shelter. Despite tireless efforts, only 3% of lost cats who enter shelters across the country are ever returned to their rightful owner.

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Strengthening the Bond Between Pets and People

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How to help a previously free-roaming cat adjust to an indoor lifestyle:

Entertainment

Try to see the interior of your house as your cat would. What needs to be changed? The key to keeping indoor cats healthy and happy lies in creating a world that appeals to their natural desires of playing, hiding, scratching, hunting, and sleeping. Cats love shelves in high places, windowsills, and lots of toys.

- Cat towers provide a necessary function as a scratching post, but more importantly they provide an area where your cat can exercise her climbing abilities. The bigger the better!
- If your windowsills aren't wide enough for your cat to sit on, provide perches so they can look outside. Bird and squirrel feeders outside windows are a source of never-ending entertainment!
- Choose toys that are "prey-like" so the cat has an opportunity to practice his hunting skills. Only take these toys out when you can play with your cat, and allow your cat to catch the "prey" for a few seconds before once again teasing your cat with the toy. This will keep them interested in the game.

Companionship

Make sure you set aside at least two 20-minute sessions of playtime with your indoor feline every day. This will help develop a strong bond between you and your cat and will help her release energy in a positive way. If you are gone most of the day, consider adopting a companion cat for your pet.

Take a Walk

You can choose to take your cat outside on a harness on a supervised basis. Make sure the harness you purchase is an H-style with two buckles, as opposed to a figure-8-style. (If you have questions, ask your local pet supply retailer.) First introduce the harness, without the leash, to your cat. After your cat has spent time indoors while wearing the harness, attach the leash and try walking indoors. Realize this training takes time and never leave your cat on a harness outdoors unsupervised!

Outdoor Enclosures

Some cat-lovers go as far as building an outdoor enclosure, which offers their pets safe access to fresh air. Enclosures can provide a great source of entertainment for you and your cat. They can be custom built to fit the needs of both your cat and your family. Outdoor enclosures provide a great place for your cat to exercise and play while allowing you to spend quality time with your cat in a safe, controlled environment. Keep edible plants in your enclosure as a safe and tasty treat for your cat. The adoption coordinators at the Humane Society of the Willamette Valley would be happy to give you ideas on how to build such an enclosure.

Understanding

Realize that while you know you're doing the right thing for your cat, your cat doesn't understand her loss of outdoor freedom. Bring her indoors slowly, let her realize the benefits you have provided for her indoors. Many cats prefer the undivided attention and toys they receive indoors.

Willamette Humane Society supports the practice of keeping cats indoors.

Indoor cats are healthier, cleaner, live longer, and bond strongly with their owners!

*Thank you to our sources:
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