Cat

Information Pack

Cats live on average around **12 years,** but some cats can live into their late teens and even reach their early 20s. Owners should be willing to commit to providing the best care for the lifetime of their pet.

Are you ready to welcome a cat into your home?

These guidelines should help you make an informed decision:

- Carefully select a cat(s) suited to your home, lifestyle and family members
- Avoid making an impulsive decision
- There are many cats and kittens in rescue centres looking for homes, look at the website of your local rescue centre and consider adopting. Please see some of the benefits here as well as how to prepare and choose the right cat for you
- If you are planning to get a kitten from a breeder look at the Kitten Checklist first for advice on choosing a healthy, friendly kitten.

Under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, pet owners are legally obliged to care for their pets by meeting their **five basic welfare needs:**

- a suitable environment
- a suitable diet
- ability to behave normally
- appropriate companionship
- protection from suffering, injury and disease

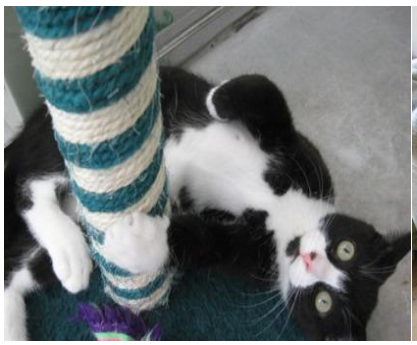
This pack provides information on how to meet these needs, and where to go for support if needed.

1. Environment - creating the ideal home for your cat

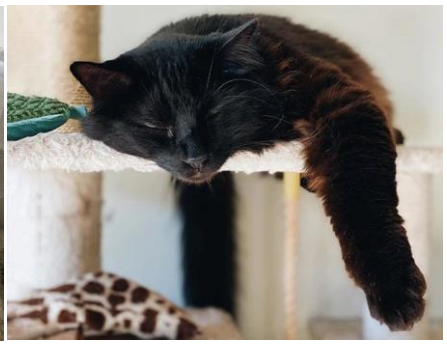
Cats need in their home:



- **At least one litter tray per cat, plus an extra one.** Place them as far away as possible from their food and water in a private, quiet location. Make sure the litter tray is cleaned regularly and disposed of properly and efficiently. If you are having issues with your cat toileting in the house, please visit here.
- **A safe place to hide** to make your cat feel safe and secure – perhaps a cardboard box or a snuggly bed somewhere cosy. Your cat shouldn't be disturbed while they are in their hiding place. Hide&Sleep beds are available to purchase through Cats Protection.
- **Access to a high spot** where they can view their surroundings. Cat perches are great for cats that like to climb but a cardboard box on a sturdy shelf is just as good.
- **A suitable place to sleep.** On average, cats spend about 16 hours a day sleeping. Cats generally rest or sleep intermittently throughout the day and will prefer to sleep in a warm, comfortable and safe place.
- **A scratching post**. Scratching is a natural behaviour for cats. If you want to protect your furniture and furnishings from your cat's claws, provide them with a suitable alternative to scratch instead, such as a scratching post or scratching mat. Cats like to stretch and scratch after they wake up so try placing the scratching post/mat near where they sleep.
- **A few cat toys** to allow them to play (see more info below).







2. Diet - providing a suitable diet for your cat

Food

Cats should be fed a **complete, balanced, good quality meat-based food**. If it has 'complete' on the packaging, the food contains all the essential nutrients that most cats need. Wet food contains more moisture, which can be especially important for some health conditions. Dry food can be left out a little longer and used in puzzle feeders. Many cats enjoy both, speak to your vet about the best food for your cat.

Cats can be fussy, so it is important to place your cat's food:

- In an area where your cat feels safe
- Away from their water bowl
- Away from their litter tray

For more information about feeding your cat, including what to do if your cat stops eating, visit here.

Water

Always ensure fresh, clean drinking water is available, especially if you feed your cat dry food. How much your cat drinks will depend on their age, size, diet and any health conditions. Water is best placed away from their food, as **cats generally prefer not to eat and drink in the same place**.

Important: Avoid giving your cat anything other than plain water to drink, especially cow's milk as many cats are lactose intolerant.

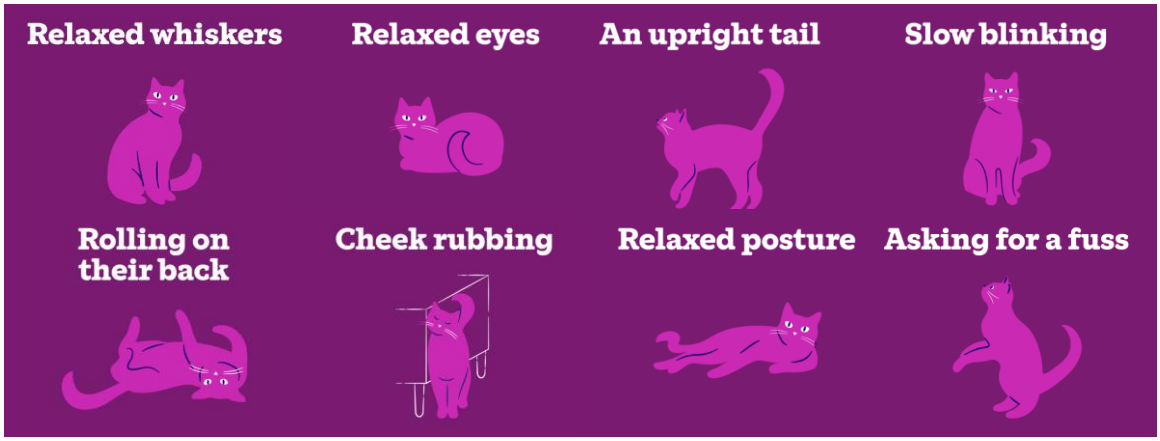
If you notice your cat suddenly drinking more or less than usual, you should take them to the vet to get checked. For more information including encouraging your cat to drink, visit here.

3. Behaviour - ensuring your cat is able to behave normally

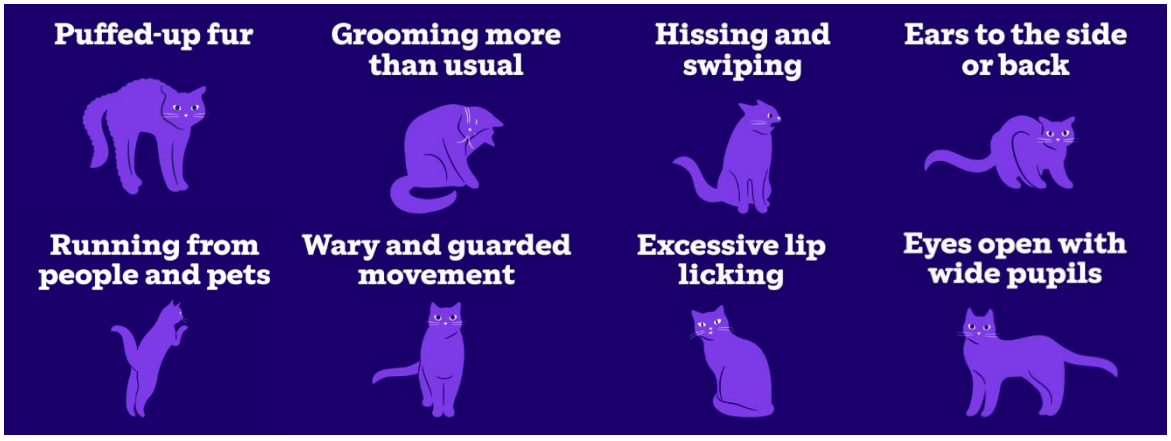
You can help to reduce unwanted behaviours such as spraying, scratching and fighting by understanding the cause of behaviours and then trying to treat the cause. Cats that misbehave may just be exhibiting normal cat behaviour.

For any behavioural issues and if your cat's behaviour changes, **the first thing to do is see your vet** as it could be a sign that they're stressed, scared or sick. Cats are subtle and complicated in the way they communicate but taking time to learn their body language can help to strengthen the relationship with your cat. Learning the signs that they are happy, or when they just want to be left alone, can be a big help to you both.

Signs that your cat is happy:



Signs that your cat is unhappy:



Enrichment and Play:

If cats become bored, they may develop behavioural problems. It's important that all cats, especially indoor cats, are given frequent opportunities to play, to allow them to engage in hunting activity, keep fit

and mentally stimulated. The best games encourage cats to stalk, pounce, chase and bat objects with a paw in a safe way.

Playing with your cat is a great way to bond and is important for their wellbeing.

Older cats will love playing three or four times a day, while younger cats will be happy to play 10 times a day or more. Very short games of 1 to 2 minutes are fine.

Toys:

- A cardboard box with holes cut in it provides a fun hiding place
- A ball of tin foil (ensure your cat can't swallow it) is fun to chase and catch
- Fishing rod toys with feathers on a string can mimic cats' prey. Allow them to catch and 'kill' the toy occasionally to avoid frustration
- Swap toys around regularly to keep them interesting
- Avoid laser pen toys, this leads to frustration as the cat can't actually catch it

Food:

Food can also be used as enrichment. Indoor cats need more entertainment than outdoor cats, so make dinner time more of a challenge by feeding cat biscuits through **a puzzle feeder** or a plastic drinks bottle with biscuit sized holes cut into it. To keep your cat occupied, give them some much-needed exercise or slow down their eating so they're not overeating, check out this video on how to make a feeding enrichment toy. You can also find out more about how to make a food puzzle.

For more information on how to keep your cats happy through play visit here.

Positive reinforcement-based training

Positive, reinforcement-based training is a great way to bond with your cat and teach them some useful life skills. Training sessions should be kept short, about five minutes at a time is ideal. Always set your cat up to succeed to avoid frustration. You can find out how to train your cat to sit, roll over, respond to their name and more with these easy-to-follow training guides.

Cats Protection have two guides to help with behaviour of your cat:

- Understanding your cat's behaviour
- Managing your cat's behaviour

4. Companionship - making sure your cat has appropriate company

While some cats may enjoy the company of other cats, this is not natural cat behaviour as they are generally territorial.

Cats are naturally solitary and often prefer being the only pet in the home.

However, they can live well together in circumstances when:

- They perceive each other to be in the **same social group**. Signs of this include seeking each other out for company, grooming each other and rubbing up against each other.
- There are **sufficient resources** (food bowls, water bowls, litter trays, beds, etc.) provided for them to avoid competition. You should allow for one per cat, plus one spare. They should be spaced out around the home so each can have their own space when accessing food and therefore they don't feel threatened or worried that another cat will take it from them. For more information, please visit here.

Neutering all the cats in your home will also help, especially if you have a male and female cat. It will prevent any unwanted pregnancies (cats can breed from 4 months old!) and can make cats less territorial (and so more likely to accept another cat in the home).

Please find more information on:

- How to introduce cats here
- How to introduce your cat to dogs or other pets here
- Detailed information on cat body language and much more here

5. Health - making sure your cat is protected from suffering, injury and disease

All cat owners should make sure their cat is:

- Neutered (see below for benefits of neutering)
- Vaccinated against disease
- Microchipped as it is the safest and permanent way to identify your cat, especially if lost or stolen-even housecats can become lost by slipping out of open windows and doors.

- Treated against fleas, parasites and internal worms based on their lifestyle and individual risk.
- Registered and seen by a vet for regular health checks and when ill or injured. Most cats aren't huge fans of being transported in a carrier, see here for information how to help your cat get used to being in carrier. Vet bills can be significant and may be difficult to deal with if they're unexpected, so you may wish to take out insurance to cover them.
- Regularly groomed, particularly for long-haired breeds is also crucial for a cat's well-being
- Getting their teeth regularly checked by a vet as dental disease is common in cats, especially as they get older



It is important to keep a close eye on your cat and if you notice any changes in their behaviour or signs of pain, take them to your vet for a health check.

Signs of pain can include any of the following:

- Becoming less tolerant of people
- Becoming more withdrawn or hiding more than usual
- Sleeping more than usual, or slowing down
- Becoming more reluctant or hesitant in jumping down from furniture or going through the cat flap
- Being stiff after resting, or using a particular leg when going up and down stairs
- Reduced eating or drinking
- Reduced grooming and playing
- For more information, please visit here.

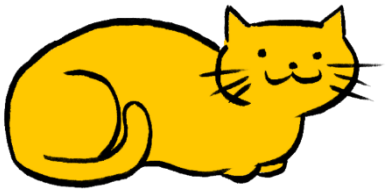
To learn more about your cat's health, there are veterinary guides which cover topics such as fleas and other parasites, arthritis and cat flu.

Thank you for reading this information pack

For information on how to care for **kittens** please visit here.

Cats Protection have many other essential guides. Topics covered include moving home, elderly cats and much more.

This guidance is provided for information purposes only and it should not be relied on as formal advice for your specific circumstances. Dog Trust accepts no liability for any loss or damage caused as a result of your reliance on it.



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Support for cat owners

Help with neutering

- **Cats Protection** run a reduced neutering scheme that allows eligible owners to neuter and microchip their cats for £10 at selected vets. To find out if you are eligible visit here and to see if Cats Protection can provide neutering support in your area, enter your postcode here. You can also phone Cats Protection for neutering enquiries on 03000 12 12 12 (option 2).

Help with vet bills

- **PDSA** can help with the costs of vet care to those in receipt of benefits. Visit their website or call 0800 731 2503 to find out if you are eligible.
- Your vet practice may offer monthly or yearly care plans to spread the cost of essential pet care such as flea and worming treatment, vaccinations and even neutering.

Help with microchipping

- **Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home** can microchip cats for £15 at their centre. You can call 0131 669 5331 to arrange this.
- **PDSA** offer microchipping at their hospitals, this costs £13. Visit their website or call 0800 731 2503 to find out if you are eligible for this service.

If you are struggling with the cost of cat food, a pet food bank may be able to help.

- **Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home** run a network of pet food banks. Please use this map to find your closest one.
- **Scottish SPCA** run Pet Aid to support people and their pets. They offer cost of living advice and run food banks. Find your closest one using this map.
- **Blue Cross** have pet food available at food banks across Scotland. Use this map to find your closest one and contact them directly to check they have pet food.

Domestic abuse

- **Cats Protection Lifeline** is a free and confidential fostering service for cats whose families are fleeing domestic abuse. You can be rest assured your cat will be taken care of until you can be safely reunited. You can email lifelinescotland@cats.org.uk or phone 0300 012 0286 to access this service.

Aftercare services

- **Cats Protection** will take your cat into their care and find them a new loving home, in the sad event of you passing away with their Cat Guardians service. Sign up here, phone 01825 741 291 or email catguardians@cats.org.uk.
- **Scottish SPCA** will take your cat into their care and find them a new loving home, in the sad event of you becoming ill or passing away with their Forever Care service. Email legacy@scottishspca.org to request a free information pack or phone 03000 999 999 (option 4).

Pet loss

- **Cats Protection** Paws to Listen is a free and confidential phoneline for those experiencing cat-related grief. The number is 0800 024 94 94 and is open Monday-Friday 9am-5pm (excluding bank holidays).

- **Blue Cross** run a Pet Loss Support service so that no one has to face the pain of losing a pet alone. The service is free and confidential and

can be accessed via emailing plsmail@bluecross.org.uk or calling 0800 096 6606. You can find more information here.

Other support

- **Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home** run **Pet Care Clinics**. This is an in-person services supporting owners with basic behavioural queries, training, advice on welfare, wellbeing checks, signposting to accessible vet appointments and other general support. You can find clinic locations here.
- It is wise to have a plan should you ever become unable to care for your bird, a family/friend might be able to help. Pet Fostering Service Scotland is a service available if you are unable to look after your pet through illness, homelessness or domestic abuse and cannot arrange any alternative care. Please phone 0344 811 9909 to access the service or email fosterenquiry@pfss.org.uk to arrange a call back.
- **Cats Protection** National Information Line can be contacted on 03000 12 12 12 if you need support with your cat. Option 1 if you are looking to adopt a cat, rehome your cat or report a stray and option 3 for general cat care queries.

Share your feedback to help us make these packs even better! Take our quick survey here