



MISSISSAUGA HUMANE SOCIETY

BRINGING A NEW CAT HOME



A LOVED CAT would live longer!

LIFESTYLE

Settling in the New Home

Moving to a new home can be very stressful for your cat. It needs time to adjust to the new environment. Many cats will hide for a few days or even a few weeks. During the 'adjustment period', it is important to observe your cat for any signs of illness. Ensure that it is eating and drinking. Rid your home of any hazards. Open windows, doors (front, garage & patio) and balconies can pose a danger. Remove toxic plants (e.g. most Lily species), frayed electrical cords and any small objects. Anti-freeze and gasoline in your garage or on the driveway can be hazardous.

For the first few days, try placing your cat in a room of its own. Have a litter box, a food bowl, a water bowl and a few toys available. Eventually when your cat seems settled in; you can let her explore the rest of the home. Kittens should be supervised during this period of exploring as they can hide in the smallest, most unsuspecting areas.

Cat Meets Cat

Cats are territorial and need to be introduced to other pets slowly. It is best to place the new cat in a separate room and allow the existing cat(s) to smell each other and play under the door. After a few days, switch the living areas. Allow the net cat to explore the house, and temporarily confine the resident cat(s) in the new cat's room. Gradually allow them to share the same home. Hissing, spitting and growling may take place for the first while during the cat-to-cat introduction. If a fight starts, use a water bottle or a loud noise to distract them. Eventually they will learn to live with one another. It may take weeks or even months!

Cat Meets Dog

The introduction should be handled much the same way as with cat(s). During the introduction, you should put a leash on your dog for more control, or put your cat in a carrier. Even just one shake to the cat's neck can be fatal. Reward your dog for good/gentle behaviour. Keep the dog and cat separated when you are not home until you are sure the cat will be safe.

Nutrition/Feeding

Good nutrition is very important to the health of your cat. A high quality diet provides more nutritional value, which means your cat eats less food daily. A 'premium' brand name food (or a prescribed diet by a vet) would prove more economical in the long term than a 'cheaper' brand, as your pet will be healthier and less vet costs would be involved! Generally, the supplies carried by pet stores are usually brand names of a higher quality, as compared to the no-name brand names (comprise mostly of 'fillers') available at grocery stores. Your cat should be fed according to its age and activity level. Kittens (under 1 yr) should be fed Kitten Food, which is important for their growth. Adult cats should be fed Adult Food and older cats (7 yrs+) should be fed a senior diet (less fat/protein). Kittens should be fed a minimum of 3 to 4 small meals a day, until they are at least 6 months old. Adult cats should be fed twice a day. Many cats like to nibble throughout the day. This is acceptable as long as the cat is not gaining weight. Provide a bowl of fresh water daily.

Cats can be finicky eaters. Both dry and canned food can provide the same level of nutrition. While dry food is good for the teeth, canned food is an excellent way of getting water into your cat, and can help maintain a healthy urinary tract. Most cats love canned food as it is tastier! It would be quite boring to be fed just plain dry food every day of its life! Your cat should be given the choice of dry and wet food.

Exercise

Exercise is an essential part of keeping your cat healthy. For an indoor cat, PLAY provides

exercise and mental stimulation, which your cat needs. Provide toys, cat trees and scratching posts. Chasing a cat toy is an excellent way for cats to stay in shape. Play with your cat daily to ensure it is getting enough exercise. Adding catnip to a toy or smearing a small amount of cat food on the toy will encourage your cat to play with it.

It is best to ADOPT a second cat as a playmate!

Litter Box

All cats should have access to a litter box in a quiet area. The box should be scooped at least once daily. Every week or two, the litter should be replaced. For cats "Cleanliness is next to Godliness". If your cat breaks its litter training, it could be a medical/behaviour issue.

Grooming

Grooming your cat is very important; long-haired ones should be brushed daily and short haired ones only need brushing once weekly. Grooming also strengthens the bond between you and your pet. Cats generally do not require bathing.

Indoor/Outdoor

Your cat should be kept indoor as much as possible. Outdoor life is full of hazards for cats. If you want your cat to have some outdoor fun and enjoy the sunshine/fresh air, this should be restricted to a fully-wired and secured outdoor enclosure, or a safety (break-away) collar/tie-out, **with SUPERVISION at all times.** You may consider harness/leash train your cat.

Declawing

Declawing is the removal of the cat's nails at its base. It is a painful surgery and it also removes a cat's primary defence mechanism. There are **alternatives** to declawing such as trimming your cat's claws, or using "Soft Claws/Paws" (nail caps) - www.softpaws.com. Using textures (sticky tape, sandpaper) and smells/odour (citrus) that your cat finds unappealing would deter it from scratching inappropriate areas. Provide your cat attention, exercise and scratching materials and it will not have time to scratch your sofa!

BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES

Cats are territorial animals. They can display this behaviour by scratching, rubbing scent off their skin, uncovering feces and spraying. Cats begin to mark territory as early as 6 months when they become sexually mature. This behaviour can be eliminated by neutering/spaying. **Spaying can prevent certain female health problems in future. A neutered cat is a more content and behaved cat. Neutering/Spaying helps to control cat over-population. One unsprayed female can end up with 420,000 kittens in 7 years!!**

Scratching

Cats scratch to condition their nails and mark their territory. Scratching also helps them to release their energy/stress and have a good stretch! A scratching post is essential for your cat. Scratching posts should be made of a material that your cat can get its claws into. They should also be large and sturdy enough for the cat to use when it is standing on its hind legs. Encourage your cat to use the post by attaching cat toys/scenting them with catnip.

Spraying

If a neutered/spayed cat sprays, it could be due to a medical issue or it feels threatened by an environmental change such as a new pet, a new baby or a move. If your cat sprays:

- Have the cat examined by a vet
- Try to maintain a routine & provide it privacy
- Try calming medications
- Try an animal behaviourist if the above fails

Biting

Spend lots of time playing with your cat so its energy is used up more constructively. Do not play with your cat by wiggling your fingers or toes - this encourages biting. Keep a toy in your pocket and direct your cat to play and focus on the toy, not on your hands or fingers!

Moonlight Madness

Cats like to prowl around after dark. If the nightly noise gets to be too much, play with your cat right before bed to wear off its energy.

HEALTH INFORMATON

Annual Check Up

An annual veterinary check up/vaccination is very important to the well-being of your cat.

Upper Respiratory Infection

(Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, Chlamydia)

Upper Respiratory Infection is a highly contagious virus spread through bodily secretions. It is also airborne and can be transferred through objects such as food/water bowls, litter boxes, cloth and human hands.

SYMPTOMS: Flu-like signs with sneezing, congestion, eye or nasal discharge, coughing, fever, loss of appetite, ulcers in the mouth.

TREATMENT: In most cases the virus is fought off by the cat's own immune system and the cat can recover without taking medication. Kittens, however, may be so severely affected that it may not survive from the infection. There is no treatment for the disease; just support care for the symptoms including antibiotics for secondary infections, most cats will recover in 7-14 days.

FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus)

FIV is similar to that of the human AIDS virus. The virus depresses the cat's immune system leading to chronic health problems and secondary infections. **It is NOT contagious to humans.** It is strictly a cat-to-cat virus transmitted through bite wounds from infected cats; the risk of transmission is very low unless there is a cat fight involved..

SYMPTOMS: A cat infected with FIV may show no clinical signs for many years. These include inflammation of the teeth/mouth, fever, diarrhea, pneumonia, skin disease, sinus infection.

TREATMENT: There is no treatment or a vaccine to protect the cat against this virus. **FIV-infected cats can live for many months and years.** With strong health care (protecting them from exposure to other diseases, good nutrition, giving vaccinations, reducing stress, and early treatment of any illness) they can enjoy a quality life.

A neutered/spayed cat helps SAVE LIVES

FeLV (Feline Leukemia)

Feline leukemia virus (FeLV) is a progressive and potentially fatal infectious retrovirus that affects the immune system/bone marrow of the cat. **It is NOT transmissible to humans** or animal species other than the cat family. FeLV is only spread by close and prolonged contact through secretions and excretions of the infected or carrier cat.

SYMPTOMS: Variable but can include anaemia, chronic infections, lethargy, and general ill health.

TREATMENT: There is no known cure/ treatment, but a vaccine is available. With very good health care, FeLV cats may live for months to years.

FIP (Feline Infectious Peritonitis)

FIP is a viral disease (coronavirus) of cats that can affect many organs/systems of the body. It is a progressive disease and is almost always fatal. **It is NOT contagious to humans** and is transmitted through the saliva and feces of the infected cat.

SYMPTOMS: Variable including fever, weight loss, lethargy, abdominal/chest fluid accumulation.

TREATMENT: There is no known cure for FIP. A vaccine is available to protect against this virus.

FLUTD (Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease)

This disease includes a number of urinary problems - bloody urine, inflammation of the bladder/urethra and urinary crystal information. In severe cases, total urinary blockage may result.

SYMPTOMS: Frequent urinating or straining to urinate, often crying out in pain, blood in urine.

TREATMENT: Emergency treatment is required for blockage and the cat needs to be 'unblocked'.

Worms

Worms are internal parasites which thrive on nutrients from your cat's intestinal tract.

SYMPTOMS: Worms in the cat's stool, vomiting, diarrhea, bloated abdomen or underweight.

TREATMENT: An annual fecal examination and a deworming schedule.