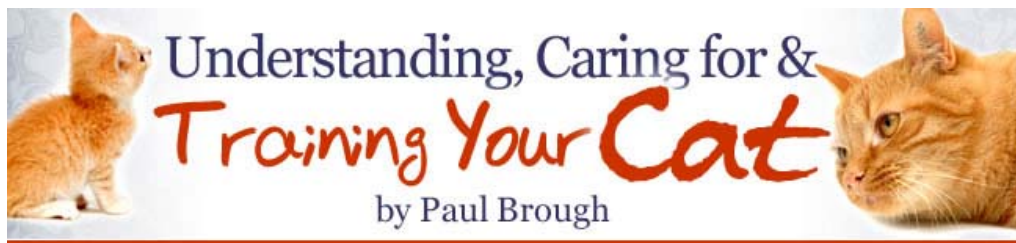


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About the Author

Paul Brough has had many types of pets but cats are probably his favorites.

He worked in a pet store when he left school but has been selling insurance for almost ten years.

He has always been interested in writing and feels that this was the ideal subject for his first book. He did not rely on just his own experience but researched among his friends and work colleagues.

Paul hopes that this collection of advice and tips will help you and your family to have a long and happy relationship when your perfect cat adopts you.

Part-I: Introduction

Cats – An Overview

Cats have been human companions since time immemorial. Ancient Egyptian, Greek, and other archeological surveys indicate the presence of feline creatures. Cats have a natural instinct to predate rodents and similar vermin that harm human life. Therefore, cats have become an intrinsic part of human life since the early ages.



Domestic cats are descendants of a group of self-domesticating desert wildcats, *Felis silvestris lybica* circa. Normally cats weigh between five-and-half and sixteen pounds with a few species weighing up to fifty pounds. Some species of cats weigh as little as four pounds.

Cats are carnivorous animals. They do not like fruits, grains, or vegetables. They have a digestive tract that suits meat digestion the best. Molar and premolar teeth on each side of the mouth can tear meat. Their tongue has sharp spines that help in ripping flesh from the skin of a carcass.

Although cats prefer a meat diet, they do need little quantities of vegetable matter for easy digestion. Adult cats are lactose-

intolerant and therefore it is best to feed them lactose-free milk.

Cats can be fussy eaters. They sometimes will refrain from eating their favorite food.

Domestic cats cannot change their inborn instinct to hunt animals. They could kill small birds, insects and animals like rats, mice, cockroaches, scorpions, grasshoppers, and others. Cats can eat prepared foods. They will like foods that you eat, rich in fats and proteins but these may not improve their well-being. Domesticated cats at times grow obese by eating rich foods. It is therefore essential for cats to have regular exercise.

Cats have a special gait, similar to camels and giraffes. They move in an unusual way with both legs moving in one direction and thereafter both legs moving in another direction.

The breed of a cat decides its temperament. Oriental body types of cats are normally thin and more active while the body type of heavier and less active cats is much different.

Cats have sharp sight at night, although daytime vision is not so sharp. They have a keen sense of hearing and can hear high-pitched sounds clearer than us. Their sense of smell is fourteen times more sensitive than humans. They are more sensitive to touch.

Cats sleep more than most animals with an average of thirteen to fourteen hours of sleep each day. Some cats can

also sleep for twenty hours in a day. Normal body temperature of a cat is between 101 and 102.2°F. The range of normal heartbeat is between 140 to 220 beats per minute. This could increase due to excitement.

Cats are not pack animals. They prefer being on their own. They like to fend for their food themselves. Nevertheless, cats have grown a social relationship with humans. They can adapt to humans easily. They make different sounds while communicating with humans. These are different from sounds they use to communicate with other animals.

Cats have an inherent liking for high places, probably for a better survey of its territory. They can land on their prey stealthily. Cats are playful creatures, especially kittens. They love playing with dangling pieces of string or yarn. However, ingestion of string could cause serious problems.

Cats have a low rate of detoxification. Therefore, they develop frequent problems due to exposure to normally safe substances. Cats do not have the necessary enzymes to tackle and deal with such toxic substances. Simple human foods like chocolate, garlic, and onions can cause upsets in cats.

Female cats can have various fertility periods within a single period of heat. This heat period could last between four to seven days, sometimes extending longer. A female could mate with different males during a heat period.

Normal gestation period for cats is 63 to 65 days. Litters could have three to five kittens. Female cats reach sexual maturity within four to ten months while males reach maturity within five to seven months. It is possible to spay cats as early as six to eight weeks. This restricts unwanted reproduction and other sex-related behavior.

Cats have a long life. Domesticated cats can live for fourteen to twenty years. Cats can survive high falls, which could prove fatal to other animals. People perceive cats to have nine lives. This is due to their ability to survive accidents and live long lives.

Cats are clean animals. They regularly lick their fur with their saliva that contains a powerful cleaning agent, which could cause allergic reactions in some humans.

There are more than thirty to forty breeds of cats with many new breeds developing regularly. There are many different varieties of cats with different color combinations. Cat coat genetics produce different coat patterns.

Part-II: Cat Breed Information

Cat Breeds Info



Abyssinian

This muscular cat has a soft coat, pointed ears, and a long tail. It comes in various colors like red, fawn, cream, lilac, or ruddy in America while it could be sorrel or fawn in the UK. This breed is very energetic.

American Bobtail

This cat could be long-haired or short-haired. These cats have a broad head with medium-sized ears, a wide nose, and a clear muzzle. Legs are proportionate to body length and the length of its tail is half the body length.

American Curl

This medium-sized cat has a soft and silky coat. It has walnut-shaped large eyes with wide and back-curving large ears. Its nose is straight and has a rounded muzzle with a firm chin.

American Shorthair

This cat is normally has specific patterns and colors like brown, silver, cream cameo, or red. It has a dense short coat.

This cat is affectionate and gets on well with children, cats and other animals.

American Wirehair

This breed is popular in the USA, although found all over the world. This breed came into existence through selective breeding of a male kitten from nonpedigreed parents. It has a curly coat in different colors. This breed has crimped hair.

Balinese

This medium-sized cat has a fine and silky coat. A tapering head starts from the nose and forms a triangle at the ears. It has long and slender legs. Its feather-like tail tapers at the end.

Bengal

This is a special breed developed through a domestic cat and an Asian Leopard cat. It is a well-tempered exotic breed with high-energy levels. They are excellent companions and require lot of affection and attention.

Birman

This breed exhibits controlled behavior. Although it is a long-haired cat, it does not require extensive grooming. This breed takes part in all action around it and loves playing with toys and children.

Bombay

These medium-sized muscular cats have fine and shiny coats. Eyes are large and ears tilt forward with rounded tips. It has a round face, short snub nose, firm chin, and round muzzle.

British Shorthair

This breed is present in a multitude of colors, patterns, and combinations. Tabby cats could be lilac-silver, chocolate tortoiseshell silver, and others. Solid cats are normally black, white, red, blue, and other colors.

Burmese

This breed has a short and glossy coat with large and round eyes. It has a round head with a firm rounded chin and short muzzle. The body is medium sized and the legs are proportionate to its body size. It has a straight tail.

Chartreux

This breed has a soft, short, and dense coat with a woolly texture. It is an affectionate and smart breed. It loves the telephone and television. These cats mature at the age of three.

Cornish Rex

This breed has an egg-shaped head with high cheekbones and a round muzzle. Eyes are oval-shaped and the ears are large. This breed has a short and wavy coat.

Devon Rex

This breed was discovered in the sixties. It has a small head with large ears. It has a crinkly coat and an impish face. It is easy to train this breed to perform simple tricks. It prefers being in warm places in the house.

Egyptian Mau

This elegant breed has an attractive coat that is silky, dense, and glossy. It normally has light green almond-shaped eyes. This breed is extrovert and smart. It can learn and perform small tricks.

European Burmese

This breed has a short, satin, and thick coat without any undercoat. It has a round head with high cheekbones. It has slender legs. This breed is heavy, although it may not appear so.

Exotic Shorthair

These playful cats have a soft and dense coat with a thick undercoat. Eyes are large and bright and ears have a slight tip towards the front. Legs are short and strong and have a short curvy tail.

Havana Brown

This breed is predominantly in brown color. It is more reddish brown than blackish brown. Although whiskers are brown, they turn white with age.

Himalayan

This breed developed through breeding of traditional Persian cats with Siamese cats. They have chubby faces with long and flowing coats. They like a quiet and calm atmosphere.

Japanese Bobtail

This breed has a medium-sized coat with large and oval eyes. It has a long head with a long nose and high cheekbones. It has a unique tail and large and wide eyes.

Javanese

This breed comes in different color combinations and patterns. Although they look delicate, they are extremely strong and muscular. This breed is smart and can identify playtimes and mealtimes clearly.

Korat

This breed of medium sized cats has smaller females than males. It has a single thick coat with short to medium length. Eyes are large and round with ears set high.

Maine Coon

This breed is the original American cat. These cats normally measure five feet from nose to tail. Brown tabby with mackerel or classic markings is the common color of this breed.

Manx

Most cats of this breed do not have a tail, although there are a few with tails. These cats have a round and stout appearance with long hind legs and short backs.

Munchkin

This new breed is through random mutation of a cat with small legs. It has a long or a short coat in a multitude of colors. This breed is active and is normally a fast runner.

Nebelung

This breed has a lustrous coat with round green eyes on a triangular head. It has erect ears and a fluffy tail. These intelligent cats are affectionate and yet shy.

Norwegian Forest Cat

This is a strong breed and has a silky coat. This breed is normally of many different colors. This breed matures late, normally around four years old. These cats are friendly pets.

Ocicat

This breed has a smooth and thick coat with large and pointed ears and almond-shaped eyes. These cats have medium-sized muscular legs and a slim and tapered tail.

Oriental

These medium-sized cats could have long or short hair with a downy undercoat. Normally, this breed is fleckless green, blue, or an orange color. It has a long slim neck with a fine muzzle.

Persian

This is one of the oldest breeds. It sports a thick coat and has a wide head with far-set ears and large eyes. These cats require regular grooming to maintain fur in good condition.

Pixie-Bob

This breed is normally over-sized with heavy bones. It has a naturally bobbed tail of around two to six inches. These are quiet cats but are affectionate and get along excellently with dogs and other pets at home.

Ragamuffin

These large cats are seen in many patterns, colors, and combinations. They mature at around four years of age and have a long life. These are very adaptable cats.

Ragdoll

These cats are of many color combinations and patterns like blue-cream, seal-tortoiseshell lynx, lilac cream lynx, and others. These cats could have a link to Burmese and Birman cats.

Russian Blue

These cats have silvery-blue coats. They are believed to belong to royal families of Russia. These intelligent cats are very affectionate towards children and elders alike.

Savannah

This exotic breed is a cross between a domestic cat and an African Serval. These are tall, slim, and large breeds. They sport dark coats with spots of a lighter shade like a silver coat with dark spots, or a tan coat with black or brownish spots.

Scottish Fold

This breed is in many colors. It is normally in folded ear or straight ear type. The special characteristic of this breed is the fold of its ear. This is due to a spontaneous mutation of an incomplete dominant gene.

Siamese

This is a very popular breed. Original Siamese cats had a dark brown contrasted body with lighter shades. Four more shades developed from this later. These are aggressive and assertive cats.

Siberian

This long-haired breed are hypo-allergenic due to their lack of a specific protein. These are playful, affectionate, and gentle cats. They make excellent companions.

Singapura

This breed is originally from Singapore. It has a muscular build with strong and slender legs. Its slender tail has a blunt tip. Body color is gold or golden ivory with light bands. It has a round head and a gentle muzzle.

Snowshoe

This is a small, lean cat breed with large, triangular eyes. Coat is short-haired and tail is medium-sized. They require more attention than other cats and therefore, cannot stay alone for long periods.

Sokoke

This is the rarest breed among cats. This moderate-sized cat has long legs and a short and dense coat. The coat is elastic and short. Tail is long and thin.

Somali

This breed has a great similarity to a fox. These cats have numerous color combinations. These cats mature late, around eighteen months of age. They are otherwise energetic and playful cats.

Sphynx

This is a medium-sized, short-haired cat. They have large eyes with high cheekbones. They normally do not have any whiskers. They have a soft and warm coat with small areas of fur on the tip of the tail or around their toes.

Tonkinese

These are short-haired, medium-sized cats. These muscular cats have large ears over a wedge-shaped head. These cats are playful and lively.

Turkish Angora

This breed is long and elegant. They have silky and medium length coats. These cats are normally white in color. They are intelligent cats and love their owners unconditionally.

Turkish Van

This breed has a seasonal coat with soft and long silky feathers. They have large oval eyes with high cheekbones, a round chin, and rounded muzzle. Tail is of medium length.



Common Cat Colors

Cat colors and combinations could be -



Tabby

Tabbies are cats with stripes. This comes across as the original color of domesticated cat. Tabby patterns could be classic tabby, mackerel tabby, tickled tabby or spotted tabby. Classic tabby is the same as blotched tabby. It has bold patterns on the sides. Mackerel tabby has parallel narrow stripes on the sides, similar to a tiger. Tickled tabby does not have spots or stripes. It has tabby markings on the face and hair. A spotted tabby has large and small spots all over.

A blue tabby could have gray stripes on dark or light blue-gray. A brown tabby could have black stripes on gray or a brown color. A cream tabby has cream stripes on a pale cream color while a red tabby has orange stripes on a cream color.

Solids and Smokes

Solid color refers to almost the same color all over your cat's body. Such solid colors are due to recessive gene that suppresses tabby patterns. Solid blue is dark blue-gray all

over while solid black could be coal black or brownish black all over.

Cats with white markings

Such cats could have smaller or larger white areas. Cats with a few white belly spots has buttons while a cat with a white spot on the chest has a locket. Cats with white paws is mitts while Van is an almost white color with a few patches on the tail and head. Bi-color is half-white while harlequin is white with large color patches. Tuxedo is a black and white combination with white color on the paws, chest, and belly.

Tortoiseshell, Patched Tabbies, and Calicoes

A random patch of different colors is a calico, tortie, or patched tabby. Tortoiseshell and white has a few white areas. Calico has more white with large black or red tabby patches. A patched tabby could have a lot of white with patterned color patches.

Pointed (Siamese) Pattern

If your cat has a dark face, tail, and paws with lighter shading on the body it is a pointed cat. Although this is a characteristic of Siamese cats, other purebreds also share this color combination.

Before You Buy a Cat

Before buying and bringing home a cat, you should consider various factors involving the cat, your house, family members and other possible factors. If you do not consider such factors, you may have to return your pet soon after you purchase and bring it home. This can cause lot of misery and sorrow all around.



Your Situation

Consider your personal situation before purchasing a cat. You should have sufficient time to care for the cat. If you have a full-time job, you should be able to take sudden leave to attend to any emergencies. Cats require company. It is not sufficient to give shelter to a cat in your house. You have to give it time just as you care for a child.

If you live in rented accommodation, find out if cats are permitted within those premises. You should have sufficient space for rearing a cat and provide scratching posts, litter boxes, sleeping places for the cat and much more. Consider whether all your family members are ready to accept a cat within the house.

Another important factor is caring for a cat. You should consider small children within the house; if they can live with a cat. They should understand how to treat the new cat as a living being and not as a toy.

Additionally, you should get a cat allergy test done for all family members. If any of your family members have cat allergies, it is best not to buy a cat.

You will require feeding bowls, towels, transport carriers or special boxes to transport cats to different places. You may have to transport your cat to a friend’s place or for a visit to the veterinarian.

Financial

Cats do have several recurring expenditures. You should consider your financial situation; whether you can afford the cat’s medical, food, and other associated expenses.

There are various routine expenses like vaccinations and costs of other accessories. You should be able to support a cat’s expenses wherever you move.

Cats normally live for fifteen to eighteen years. You should be able to support all its expenses over its life.

The Breeder

You should look into the health standards of the place where you are purchasing your cat. It should be a licensed and

registered establishment. It is best to purchase from recommended sources.

You could ask for dependable recommendations from your friends and relatives that have cats as pets. Get your veterinarian to perform a thorough examination of the kitten you purchase and follow up any problems with the breeder as soon as possible.

The Cat Itself

Refrain from making an impulsive purchase. Do not buy a cat that looks pathetic or sick. It could cause serious health problems for your young ones at home. Do not take home a cat that requires extensive nursing. Your family members would be aghast if you have to give back the pet after some time. Check for adequate worming and recent vaccinations of your kitten.

Adult cats should have proper house training. Do not buy aggressive cats, as these usually cannot make good household pets.

Cats are lovable and affectionate pets. They soon become an important member of your family. Therefore, before purchasing a cat, consider all possible aspects before you welcome your new member. This can save you many heartbreaks and disappointments later.

If you are in doubt over any particular fact, it is best not to buy and bring home that cat or kitten.

Selecting a Cat that is Right for You

Many often choose to buy a cat of a specific breed as it assures specific personality traits. However, this is not always true.

Traits are common to breeds and not to all cats or kittens within the breed. Breed alone cannot decide the type of cat a kitten grows into. It depends more on its parentage and the social order it has been in since its birth.



While selecting a cat that is right for you and your family, consider these factors:

Kitten or Adult

Kittens are truly irresistibly cute. It would be difficult choosing a cat over a kitten. Nevertheless, you should look into the practical aspects of choosing a kitten. They require a lot of attention and care in their growing years. You need to train them in all aspects like litter training, feeding and mingling with other pets in the house. Adult cats are normally trained and can soon settle in new premises and surroundings.

Children in your house would love to have kittens as their playmate. However, kittens have sharp claws and teeth. They do not know how to control them yet. Children could unwittingly cause harm to kittens. You need constant adult supervision with kittens and children around. Adult cats accustomed to family life do not get ruffled with such situations.

If you already have pets in your house, cats could prove to be a difficult choice. Adult cats take more time to adjust to other pets than kittens. Sometimes adult cats could slip off to their previous home or shelter. This is not so likely with kittens. However, if you already have a pet dog, a cat may be a safer bet than a kitten.

Male or Female

There is always a difference of opinion in whether a neutered male cat is better than a spayed female cat. Some say male cats are more independent while female cats are more loving. Unneutered males can cause pungent urine spraying, fighting, and they may wander. Similarly, females in heat could cause serious problems. Besides, unplanned litters could prove to be a serious hindrance. If you already have a neutered male, bringing home a young neutered female would be ideal. It could prove to be a good companion.

Behavioral Patterns

While choosing kittens from a shelter, try to notice their behavioral patterns while interacting. A kitten that is clawing or biting you repeatedly could grow into an aggressive cat. A kitten that is not willing to approach you or is shying away from crowds could grow into a timid cat. The ideal choice would be a kitten that responds to your voice or touch positively.

It should also interact and play in a similar fashion with its brothers and sisters. This shows how well it can mingle within your household.

Physical Appearance

Choose cats and kittens that look healthy with bright and clean white teeth without any tartar accumulation. Eyes should be clear of any wax accumulations. It should have a thick, shiny, and soft coat in accordance to its breed. Its nails should be smooth and clean.

Purebred or Mixed Breed

There are many recognized breeds and colors of domestic cats. Pedigree can help you understand its behavioral traits, physical growth, and similar details. You can collect necessary details from local breeding clubs and associations before making your choice and purchasing a cat.

However, pure bred or pedigree does not always mean that these cats will follow the specific traits. There maybe other deciding factors.

Additionally, animal shelters also take great care and pains to select the correct house for their cat or kitten. In some areas, they visit your house to see if your chosen pet can fit in with your household. Further, they might also follow up with the pet even after you purchase and bring it home.

Where Can You Buy a Cat?

As soon as you decide to have healthy, well-behaved pet cat in your home, you will have a lot of genuine questions and queries about the animal.

The first thought that will come in your mind will be the accessibility of a well-bred cat. You have to be cautious and well-informed to select a good cat.

When you are mentally prepared to take on the responsibility of a pet, the big question that arises is from where you are going to get it?



There are so many options available; from friends, relatives or from your neighbor with whose cat you might be well acquainted. A cat breeder is yet another source where you could get your dream cat.

Usually, breeders take good care of the overall development of cats but you have to be selective and informed about any particular supplier before getting a cat from one. You can usually rely on breeders that are registered with well-known cat societies and clubs.

Again, there are high quality unregistered shops, chains of pet stores, and animal welfare societies that can fulfill your demand of a dream cat. Avoid adopting a stray cat without knowing its origin and background. Lost cats often travel long distances so their real owners might be searching for them.

Experienced owners suggest that a responsible breeder in your neighborhood, who is careful about immunization vaccination and timely breeding, is suitable in all respects. They will usually be happy to provide every detail about your prospective pet right from its general habits to its health, etc.

You should get a proper buying contract, which is a type of health contract your breeder will provide during the time of purchase. It mostly confirms that proper immunization from FeLV, FIV, parasites, and fungi have been done if the kitten is old enough. Contracts vary from breeder to breeder, so read it with care. You have to be careful, clear minded and cautious while adopting a pet. You will surely find a healthy, fluffy and lovely pussycat if you take care, time, and thought.

Part-III: Cat Behavior

Common Cat Behaviors Explained

Cat behavior can at times prove intriguing and irritating. Your cat behaves in an extraordinary fashion only because of some special cause. There are never any bad cats. It is only that your cats are trying to inform you about something, probably, which you are unable to understand.

Therefore, train your cat right from the start and pay attention to its behavior patterns to understand what your cat wants to convey.



Attention-Seeking Behavior

Cats could sometime howl incessantly and at odd times. It could also meow or cry loudly. Or it could keep going round your legs. It could try inappropriate scratching on furniture or carpets. Often such attention seeking behavior is due to stress or anxiety. Such emotions could be due to a recent change of residence, your new baby or pets in your home, your

prolonged absence from home, or aggression or sickness of another cat.

An old cat howling in the middle of the night may be due to growing senility with increased deafness. Sometimes, cats race around the house rolling fur on their back. See your vet to confirm if it is due to Rippling Skin Disorder or feline hyperesthesia. Veterinarians suggest simple dietary changes coupled with medication for eradication of fleas and toxins. A regular exercise program can bring marked behavioral changes in your cat.

Cats asking for your attention would keep going round your legs. Insistent meowing is also another form of getting vocal with you. Schedule some time to sit and talk to your cat. It will meow back and soon would be happy talking to you. Make it a routine and your cat will mostly stop meowing and wait for the specific time to come. Similarly, inappropriate scratching is a form of getting your attention.

Incessant meowing could also be due to pain. In case of excessive stress or anxiety, veterinarians might suggest anti-anxiety drugs, (tranquilizers used to relieve anxiety and reduce tension and irritability).

Aggressive Behavior towards People

Aggression in cats towards people could take the form of biting, fighting, or scratching. Some cats behave aggressively due to inadequate training as a kitten. Biting and scratching

are natural instincts of a cat. Right from the start, you should teach your kitten or cat that your hand is not a toy for scratching or biting.

The most effective way to instill discipline is to hold your cat by the scruff of the neck, push downwards, and utter a firm ‘No’. This mimics similar disciplinary action by the mother cat in its childhood. You can release your hold after few seconds. This incident stays in its memory for a long time.

Bored cats also resort to aggressive behavior. Provide a new and interesting toy. Sometimes excessive petting could stimulate your cat. You may not pay attention to its feelings expressed through pulled back ears and narrowed eyes. It could be also due to hormonal imbalances, unnoticed wounds, or distress due to fleas and mites. Veterinarians could suggest simple remedies for these problems.

Aggression towards Other Cats

Cats within the same household could behave aggressively at times.

Play fighting or aggression between related and unrelated kittens and cats is normal. Their natural survival instinct induces them to be predatory and stalk other cats. On a playful note, one will pounce on the other and it will continue into a repetitive process. Although, this is harmless in the short term, it could establish the pecking order, if this play

continues for too long; it could lead to severe aggression with scratching sessions.

Sexual Aggression is easily identifiable. One cat would try to mount another with hip thrusting movements and bite at the nape of the other cat’s neck. Try hissing at the cat. Your action should be gentle yet firm. This should cause your aggressor cat to be in a subservient posture for some time. It could roll over. The victim cat would move away whining.

Territorial Aggression could erupt suddenly between cats of the same sex or different sex. This aggression is normally through territorial marking or urine spraying. Normally, the aggressor cat would attack other cats with laid-back ears, straight posture, hissing, and growling. The victim cat would move away submissively accepting the social hierarchy. Sometimes, the victim cat will refuse to accept this and serious fighting could ensue.

The best way to deal with this is to separate the two cats physically and keep them in separate places so that they do not come across one another. Be careful while separating them, as they may not recognize you in their fight and you could suffer injuries. Separation could be for few hours or days. The cats later find ways of settling scores between themselves. They may even forget the incident.

In serious cases, your veterinarian could suggest medications like Buspirone, Amitriptyline, or Valium. Feliway Plug-In

releases pheromones into the atmosphere to calm aggressive cats.

Chewing Incidents by Cats and Kittens

Cats and kittens engaging in destructive chewing could cause a lot of harm to your possessions and health of your pet. Chewing could be gnawing at furniture, computer cords, electrical wiring, and other things. Chewing could be due to boredom, simple curiosity, nutrient deficiency, or teething in kittens. You can provide lot of different toys and playthings for your cats and kittens to relieve them of boredom. You could give them self-exploring cat towers, tunnel shaped cardboard boxes, or wall or mounted toys.

Chewing on electrical cords could cause instances of choking, electrical shocks, and even death. Discourage such action by making all electrical cords and wires inaccessible to your feline pets. You can cover all cords with pre-split hollow tubing or try using corrugated tubing. Apply various rows of double-sided sticky tape around any cord tangles.

Spray bitter apple spray on your cords to prevent such chewing incidents by your cats.

Cats could chew on houseplants, some of which are poisonous for them. Remove such plants or spray them with bitter apple spray. Some cats chew on leather and fabrics. You can try hiding these chewable favorites or spray bitter apple spray on them. You can also provide specific teething toys for your little

kittens to chew on while their teeth come in. Plastic drinking straws prove to be an ideal chewing plaything for kittens and adult cats alike.

Cats and Their Destructive Scratching

Claws prove to be the greatest weapon of a cat. It is their natural instinct to scratch claws against hard surfaces like furniture and carpet sheaths. This is to sharpen their claws and remove a transparent sheath that grows over their claws restricting free movement of the claws. Additionally, it tones the shoulders and back muscles of your cat. Yelling or physical punishment of your cat for this behavior only causes confusion. Instead, use simple remedial measures to protect your furniture and allow your cat to scratch.

Build a few sturdy vertical scratching posts and cover with a hard material like sisal. Put them around the common scratching places in your house. Play around this new post for some time and soon your cat would recognize and use it as an ideal scratching post. Give small rewards to your cat for using this post. This refrains cats from going to other scratching options.

Another way of discouraging unwanted behavior is to spray your furniture with citrus-scented spray. You can spray a little water on your cat when you catch him in the act. Otherwise, place some aluminum foil on couch arms and sides. Similarly, stick double-sided stickers around your furniture to prevent

cats from venturing anywhere there. Shake a can with a few pennies the moment you notice your kitten or cat scratching at some forbidden place. Cats dislike this sound and will stop immediately.

Litter Box Misuse

Kittens need appropriate litter box training in their initial months. Normally, cats and kittens like to have individual litter box. Their box should be immaculately clean. A slight change or odor can make your cat go to the bathroom outside the litter box. Also, check your cat for any urinary tract problems. This causes pain while urinating, so cats associate this with the litter box and therefore pee outside the box. Immediate medical help is necessary to fix the problem.

Cats are jealous and possessive. A new pet, baby, or anything that restricts his share of your attention can disrupt your cat's behavior. Cats are habitual creatures. If you have moved in recently or shifted the litter box elsewhere, give adequate time for your cat to adjust to new surroundings and come back to a regular routine.

Sometimes male or female cats indulge in spraying to mark their territory. Stress could also be one cause for such unjustified action by your cats. Veterinarians suggest anxiolytic drugs, although the results take time to work.

Compulsive Behavior by Cats

Cats and kittens sometimes develop compulsive behavior of wool sucking, fur pulling, or excessive licking. There is no explainable cause for such behavior, although many associate it with early weaning from the mother. The best way to keep your fabrics safe is to keep all woolens like sweaters in closets and drawers out of reach of your feline pets.

If you cannot move away carpets, try spraying it with bitter sprays or cayenne pepper. This dissuades cats from chewing. A water pistol or shaking a can of coins can scare away your cat if caught in action. Another way of stopping such unwanted chewing habits is to change the diet of your cat or kitten. Include more fiber by adding wheat or oat bran in every meal. Chewing lettuce leaves proves very effective. Include crunchy foods like bacon or green beans in your cat's diet.

Anxiety and Stress in Cats

Stress can stem from anywhere but it affects cats drastically. Stress can causes severe behavioral and health problems. It causes aggressive behavior, litter box avoidance, withdrawal, or depression. Cats cannot accept environmental changes easily. Moving into a new house, having a new spouse, the inclusion of a new baby or new pet can cause stress. You need to reassure your cat that he is still the most preferred. You can do this by giving him sufficient time to adjust, and allow

him to accept the new environment and people at his own pace.

Death of a family member or another pet can cause extreme stress in cats. You can overcome this by giving the cat a piece of clothing of the deceased. This makes up for the absence of their physical presence.

Restrict and lower your personal stress levels to bring about changes in your cat’s stress levels. There are various homeopathic and other medical remedies.

Part-IV: Cat Health

Creating a Healthy Environment for Your Cat

Pets and especially cats need a conducive and friendly environment to be healthy and happy. Previously, it was believed that cats as a species needed outdoor ventures to develop naturally.



Now it is established that a cat, which has never been freed for roaming can be quite happy and natural in its environment if you spare some time from your busy schedule to entertain your cat. In this way, they can be even more secure from infectious diseases and accidents.

If you let your cat be a free roamer then you definitely run the risk of losing your cat forever. Almost 70 percent of the cats that go missing do not return home. Free roaming cats also adversely affect the wildlife populations as they bring down the population of birds alarmingly.

For complete protection of your pet you have to be systematic and organized, so that your pet finds it easy to settle in the environment you are trying to keep it in.

It will also need a secluded place for climbing and hunting along with a safe and secure corner, which it can use as a hiding place in case of any danger.

Its hunting urges can be fully satisfied by introducing different games and sports. This personal contact will garner a special bond between you and your pet.

Cats are quite sensitive about how they are treated by their masters. Gently, touching and petting your cat works wonders and in no time you will find your pet hovering around you and getting cozy with you.

You have to be a bit patient about roaming. It is a natural urge. Sometimes taking out your cat for a stroll can be entertaining for your pet. A harness-collar will help you in having better control over it. You can also use a carrier for your pet to take it anywhere at anytime.

The Humane Society of the USA published a report that clearly shows that the mortality rate of free roamers is much higher than indoor cats. The latter maintain finer health than the former.

Common Cat Diseases and Health Problems

Cats suffer from almost the same diseases as humans.

Although some diseases are hereditary, you can avoid others through regular medical care of your felines. As a pet owner, you should have a good knowledge of all possible diseases, necessary medications, and precautions. This can assure you of a healthy and lifelong feline companion.



Most health problems in cats are avoidable through preventive care and techniques. It is best to keep your cat indoors and outdoor outings should be under strict supervision. Routine vet checks can ensure a healthy life for your pet.

Cat Diseases and Health Problems

Cancer: Cats could suffer from different types of cancer like bone cancer, lung cancer, nasal cancer, skin cancer, and many others. Lung cancer could cause your cat to breathe heavily and with difficulty. Oral cancer could cause problems in swallowing and eating, with mouth bleeding. Bone cancer could make your cat lame or lead to stiffness in the joints and limbs. Non-healing wounds and scars could indicate skin

cancer while incessant nasal discharge could indicate nasal cancer.

You should visit your veterinarian as soon as you notice any symptoms. A small delay could cost the life of your feline. Routine examination of your cat’s body through stroking and massaging can help you identify any extra bulge or bump.

Some of the symptoms of cancer are the same as that of other diseases. Therefore, get an expert opinion from one or more doctors. At times, early diagnosis can cure cancer.

Chronic Renal Failure: The main characteristic of this condition is irreversible and a gradual decline in kidney function. This is a common ailment in elderly cats. Kidneys consists of various nephrons that filter fluids. These nephrons could stop functioning due to age, ill health, or other causes. This causes accumulation of toxins like urea and creatinine in the blood.

Difficulty in urinating is the main symptom of this disease. There are other symptoms like weight loss, dull coat, excessive thirst, and loss of appetite. Veterinarians diagnose the presence of this disease through a urine analysis and blood test to measure levels of red blood cells, blood urea, and creatinine.

Veterinarians prescribe oral medications and Epogen shots for cleaning toxins from the kidneys. In severe cases, your cat could require hospitalization for dehydration. You can learn to

administer subcutaneous fluids at home. Additionally, feed a low phosphorous and low protein diet to your cat. As such cats lose their appetite, you can use stimulants like tuna juice, premium cat food juices, and human baby food meat. In severe cases, force feeding through syringes could prove necessary.

Dental Health and Oral Diseases: This is the single most important cause for health problems in cats. Feline Stomatitis is often misunderstood as an autoimmune disease. This causes severe inflammation of the mouth and throat thereby affecting eating habits severely. Periodontal disease is due to inflamed and bleeding gums and bad breath. This is due to bacterial accumulation in gums. Feline odontoclastic lesions affect enamel and dentin of a tooth. Prolonged lesions could cause permanent loss of tooth.

You do not have to wait for dental diseases to start to care for the dental health of your feline. Instead, begin with a regular dental brushing and caring routine for your kitten. Use special cat toothbrushes with flavored toothpastes to keep dental problems at bay.

Deafness and Ear Conditions: It is possible to notice deafness in cats in the early stages itself. Common symptoms include loud meowing, failure to respond on calling, dizziness, clawing at ear, shaking head regularly, unpleasant odor from ears, regular pus, or other drainage. Deafness could be due to nerve damage or infections. Medications can correct the

problem in many cases. Regular grooming requires cleaning of cat's ears of mites by putting few drops of warm olive oil into your cat's ears.

Eye Problems and Blindness: Cats normally have better vision than humans do. Glaucoma causes excessive pressure within the eye. Untreated cataracts cause glaucoma. Early treatment can prevent further damage to optic nerves. Surgery could be necessary in advanced cases. Eye tumors necessitate removal of the eye.

Progressive retinal atrophy is a hereditary problem causing decreasing eyesight resulting in complete blindness. Hypertension could cause eye problems like sudden blindness. Cats cope with their blindness through increased sensitivity of other senses like smell, touch, and hearing.

Feline Arthritis: This is common among aging felines. Excessive weight is the predominant cause for feline arthritis. Common symptoms include change in walking patterns due to joint pain, stiffness in joints while arising from rest, and few personality changes.

Veterinarians may suggest Chondroitin and Glucosamine to improve cartilage formation around joints. Vitamin C supplements could suit some cats. NSAIDs might cause serious side effects. Simple treatments include having a regular exercise program to control the weight of your cat and providing artificial warmth to joints to ease pain and stiffness.

Feline Diabetes: This disease can affect cats of any age, although it is more prevalent in elderly male cats, specifically obese cats. Common symptoms include dehydration, excessive thirst, poor appetite, and poor quality of coat, weakness, and breathing problems. Veterinarians check for sugar levels in blood and urine to diagnose feline diabetes.

Common treatment options include oral hypoglycemic medications, regular insulin injections administered at the hospital, and maintaining specific diet control. Diet rich in fiber and carbohydrates can control weight and blood glucose levels. You can monitor blood glucose levels in your cat through a monitoring kit used for diabetic humans.

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV): This is feline AIDS. Presently, there is no cure for this disease. Infected cats could live long lives. FIV transmission is through deep bite wounds and normally through rectum, mouth, or vagina. It therefore affects cats during territorial battles.

House cats do not normally suffer from FIV. This disease affects and disables the immune system of cats. It makes it more prone to infections. Different body cells like B-lymphocytes, CD4+ and CD8+ T lymphocytes, and macrophages suffer extensive infection due to FIV.

However, cats cannot transmit FIV to humans. FIV occurs in three stages. The acute stage is the initial two months after transmission. During this time, your cat could suffer from fever and depression. In the second stage, all symptoms of

the disease could disappear, although your cat remains infected. The third stage is the final stage. Your cat finally succumbs to the infection. This is due to complete stopping of functioning of the body's immune system.

Feline Infectious Diseases: There are various feline infectious diseases. Most such respiratory diseases are through feline herpes virus, feline calicivirus or feline rhinotracheitis virus. Bordetella bronchiseptica infection, Feline chlamydia psittaci infection and Mycoplasma infection are some of the important infections.

Other viruses and bacteria causing infections in cats include pasteurellae, streptococci, staphylococci, and coliforms.

Feline Panleucopenia is an infectious disease affecting white blood cells and causing enteritis. Vaccination proves effective.

Feline leukemia virus causes infection through transfer of nasal secretions or saliva, feces, urine, and milk from infected cats. An infected mother can transfer the virus to her kittens during lactation or even before birth. This virus could cause cancer and various blood disorders. It is possible spread the disease through sharing of feeding bowls. There is no cure for this disease and it is normally fatal. In the first stage, a high immune response can eradicate the virus from the body. In the second stage, it leads to persistent infection of bone marrow. Cats with this disease could live long lives. If your cat has serious symptoms, it may not survive for more than few months.

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus causes infections although over a longer period.

Feline Cowpox causes lesions on skin of cats. There is a vaccine for such infections. Antibiotics could prove useful. Cats can transfer such infections to humans. Simple hygienic precautions can prevent transfer of such infections to humans. However, if you already suffer from skin diseases, you stand a greater chance of contracting such infections. It is best to use gloves and prevent infected material from coming in contact with open wounds or eyes.

Gastric Tract Diseases: There are many gastric diseases like inflammatory bowel disease, gastritis, diarrhea, hepatic lipidosis, and others. These diseases occur mainly due to inflammation of intestinal linings. Common symptoms of gastric diseases include chronic vomiting, loss of appetite, lusterless coat, weight loss, renal failure, and others. Veterinarians normally suggest controlled diet with limited amounts of proteins and carbohydrates. Corticosteroids and certain antibiotics can provide substantial relief.

Heart Diseases: Heart diseases in cats could be Feline Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy, Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy, Intermediate Cardiomyopathy, or Feline Hypertension. Most heart diseases are due to genetic causes. Such heart diseases are more common in middle-aged male cats.

Common symptoms of heart diseases in cats include fainting, sudden difficulty in breathing, weakness, and paralysis of rear

legs. Veterinarians diagnose the presence of heart disease through ECGs, X-rays, Echocardiography, and other tests. They recommend calcium channel blockers like diltiazem, beta-blockers like metoprolol and atenolol and various other inhibitors and diuretics.

Hip Dysplasia: This is due to displacement of hip joints in your cat. Due to such displacement, the femur ball no longer fits into the hip socket joint. This leads to arthritis and excessive pain in the joints. Affected cats would show little interest in walking, running, or similar forms of exercise. This disease is mainly genetic. Normally cats with larger bones develop this disease.

Although there is no specific treatment available for hip disease, surgery can help through prosthetic installation into joints. You can reduce the weight of overweight cats through diet regulations. Anti-inflammatory medicines and painkillers can give relief.

Liver Disease: Fatty liver disease is a common ailment in cats. This disease occurs due to fatty deposits in liver tissue. There is no apparent cause for such deposits. Most veterinarians assign this disease to the way in which certain cats digest their fats and proteins.

Common symptoms of liver disease is a sudden drop in eating habits of previously overweight cats. This causes continuous loss of weight with frequent bouts of vomiting and yellowing of the skin and eyes.

Liver biopsy under light anesthesia can detect the presence of the disease. Early diagnosis of the disease can prevent further deterioration. Although your cat would be most unwilling to eat anything, it is necessary to force-feed. This is possible through insertion of a feeding tube directly into the stomach or esophagus.

You have to feed small quantities of food through the tube regularly. After a few weeks, you can offer food normally to check appetite levels.

Neurological Disorders: Neurological disorders in cats can take the form of seizures due to tumors, hypertension, parasitical causes, viral infections, poisoning, and others. Cats with such disorders may depict sudden and unexplainable behavior like running round in circles, going blank for some time, loud meowing at night, frequent mood swings, maniac grooming, or rippling skin on the back. Ingestion of certain toxic plants could cause neurological disorders. Some garden sprays, cleaning products, and pest killers could cause such disorders.

Veterinarians diagnose neurological disorders in cats after a thorough physical examination with a CT scan, blood tests, MRI, and cerebral spinal fluid analysis. Anti-convulsion drugs can control seizures over a few weeks.

Parasitic Disease: Parasites like fleas and mites cause various parasitic diseases. Fleas cause allergies, anemia, tapeworms, and skin infections. Always use flea remedies as

suggested by your veterinarian. Tapeworms are internal parasites. Your cat could develop such infections through ingestion of raw meat or fish. Veterinarians can suggest tapeworm medications after inspection of a fecal sample of your cat.

Roundworms, whipworms, and hookworms are similar internal parasites causing infections in your cats. Common symptoms of such infections include diarrhea, vomiting, dull coat color, and a potbelly. Lack of proper treatment could prove fatal.

Coccidia are internal parasites entering a cat’s body through ingestion of infected feces of other animals. It often causes severe diarrhea and weight loss due to loss of appetite. Fresh fecal samples can help your veterinarian suggest suitable remedy.

Ear mites are microscopic parasites causing severe infections and wax-build-up in ears of cats. They cause severe itchiness and could lead to deafness if untreated. Use prescribed medicines on your affected and unaffected cats, as these parasites move from one cat to another.

Respiratory Disease: Feline asthma symptoms are very similar to hairball attack or choking. It is best to check such recurrent symptoms. Feline asthma is due to allergens in the upper respiratory tract. This causes tightening of bronchi and resultant swelling of surrounding tissues. Bacterial infections could cause other respiratory tract diseases in felines.

Common asthmatic allergens include dust, household chemicals, mold, smoke, cat litter, pollen, and cold or moist air. Cats with asthma could suffer exercise related attacks. Thorough examinations through blood tests, chest x-rays, and bronchoalveolar lavage can detect presence of feline asthma. Veterinarians insert endotracheal tubes under general anesthesia to extract fluids in lungs for examination.

Keep your home as smoke-free as possible. Do not light scented candles or smoke within your house, specifically near your cats. Keep all basements and other parts of the house free of mold and dust. Refrain from plugging in air-fresheners or using household chemicals liberally. Veterinarians prescribe prednisone pills or injections and use of an inhaler depending on the severity of asthma in your cat.

Skin Problems: Skin diseases in cats are due to parasites, fleas, allergies, and other things. These cause cats to scratch their skin uncontrollably. Another type of skin disease causes severe loss of hair on skin with many bald patches. Skin coat is brittle and coarse. It could also cause pus formations and other infections, most of which are painful.

Thorough examination of skin coat while grooming your cat can prove helpful in discovering any possible skin disorders and infections. Veterinarians often prescribe hormone shots with tranquilizers to help cats refrain from excessive scratching.

Feline Acne develops as black spots and it could be due to a specific food allergy like milk. It could also be due to improper cleaning of the chin of your cat. Acne is due to bacteria present in food or water bowls due to improper cleaning. Leave such spots without any picking or pricking. Thorough washing and application of prescribed medications can help relieve your cat of all types of skin diseases.

Thyroid Disease: Hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism are common thyroid ailments in older cats. Common symptoms of this disease include increased urination, increased appetite, weight loss, hyperactivity, excessive thirst, panting, increased shedding, vomiting, and diarrhea. Simple blood tests can diagnose the presence of this disease.

Oral administration of hyperthyroidism medications can control the disease within two to three weeks. However, it causes serious side effects like blood clotting, vomiting, and loss of appetite, itching around the face and head, jaundice, and other things. Surgery is another treatment option, although older cats find it difficult to withstand the anesthesia. Radioactive iodine therapy consisting of iodine injections under the skin proves to be the ideal remedy. However, such therapy is costly and requires prolonged hospitalization.

Urinary Tract Disease: This disease normally causes a lot of pain. If untreated, it could prove fatal for your cat. Urinary tract diseases include urethral blockage, bladder stones,

infection, crystals, and similar others. Infection could be due to fungus, bacteria, or virus.

Urethral obstructions occur in male cats due to a longer and narrower urethra. Small debris-like formation of proteins and minerals may cause obstructions. This restricts flow of urine and causes toxic substances to settle in the blood. This could cause death if untreated within 72 hours.

Common treatment options include fluid therapy, catheterization, antibiotics, and surgery. Simple dietary changes with smaller and more frequent meals and lots of water can bring in marked changes in urinary tract infections.

The Vaccinations Your Cat Really Needs

Today's market is flooded with variety of vaccines that are effective for different types of cat diseases. One of the most common diseases that affects all warm-blooded animals including cats is rabies. You need to protect your pet cat from it. The most explicit sign of rabies in your pet is a sudden change in behavior. It tends to become more aggressive.



You should get your cat vaccinated when it is 12 to 16 weeks. Another virus that affects your pet is Feline Calicivirus. Its symptoms include fever, oral ulcers, nasal discharge, pneumonia, vomiting, arthritis, and diarrhea. The virus has a low mortality rate and thus is fatal. Besides, a virus like Feline Panleukopenia can be transmitted by excretions from the body and can cause dehydration, fever, diarrhea, low count of WBC, and even some neurological problems.

A special vaccine that safeguards from bite or contact from infected cats is Feline Leukemia (FeLV). Immunization with this vaccine should be done within 8 to 12 weeks and it needs early repetition within 3 to 4 weeks. The vaccination time can

then be further extended to a gap of one year. Animals that are prone to FeLV should be given the vaccination.

If your pet shows sign of appetite loss, distended abdomen, any infection in the eyes, breathing trouble or high fever then it could be infected with Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP) virus, and you need immediate immunization from this vaccine which is given yearly by oral drops. Your pet needs protection from Chylama, yet another bacterial disease transmitted by oronasal secretion.

With a pet like a cat at home, you often might think about why it needs vaccinating when it does not go out and whether it really needs vaccines every year, etc. However, the truth is that most such infections are transmitted through bats. Therefore, if your pet has any of these symptoms, high fever for more than 48 hours, loss of appetite, any lump for over 4 to 8 weeks or vomits frequently then you should hurry before it is too late. As the saying goes '*Prevention is better than cure*', so is vaccination better than remedial measures.

Caring for Your Sick Cat

Here are few effective ways that will help you take care of your sick cat in a better way.



Give your sick cat its personal space

If your home has large closet or a room, you may allot that space for your cat. Or else you may also provide a separate corner where your cat will not be disturbed. A little space to your pet cat might just do wonders.

Provide your sick cat its own litter pan

If you have many pets in your house do make certain that your cat does not share the litter pan with others while sick. Sharing during troubled times make the pets nervous and they will feel good if they find all facilities nearby.

Keep water and food supplied regularly

Feed your cat tissue-building, high-value food. Check with your vet the best kind of food to give. Make sure the food is rich with necessary proteins and vitamins. Try to feed your cat by yourself. You may give a liquid diet or soft food. Keep the

food tempting. Place a bowl of water nearby so that your pet is well hydrated and well nourished.

Pay regular visits to your sick cat

Do not leave your sick cat alone to nurse itself during an illness. Affection is a great booster for animals just as humans. Spend some time with your pet cat, talk and pet your cat, this will make it feel good.

Record temperature regularly

You should maintain a temperature chart for your cat. Make your cat lie flat on your lap and insert about one inch of the thermometer into its rectum. However, do not forget to coat the tip of the thermometer with mineral oil or petroleum jelly before inserting. Place the thermometer inside for three to four minutes and after cleaning it with absorbent cotton read it. The normal range for a cat's temperature is 101 to 102 degrees.

Provide your cat with a heating pad

A little warm pad may be comfortable for your cat. The warmth will give the cat a feeling that it is not alone.

General Instructions

1. Follow the instructions of your vet properly.
2. Do not hesitate to ask for instructions in writing to clear any confusion.

3. Be sure who to contact during an emergency.
4. Keep enough medication in stock (**and away from children**).
5. If your cat is nervous, wrap the cat in a towel and place it in a safe space.
6. Record your cat's activities closely, for example, the frequency of meals taken, urination, changes in the condition, etc.
7. Call your vet immediately if the condition deteriorates.

Keeping Your Cat Healthy the Natural Way

Cats may be infected by serious conditions.

Here are ‘natural’ treatments for the five such common conditions. But, always consult your vet before using any treatment for your cat or other pet.



Flea Allergies: This is common with cats and results in severe itching and hair loss.

The natural care for such condition is the use of tea-tree oil. Applying tree oil to the problem area can bring great relief to your cat. However, check the concentration of the oil before you apply it as this might leave your cat sick. Nevertheless, this may not be the cause of concern, as there is tree oil with the appropriate strength available on the market.

Evening Primrose oil, which comes in a form of a capsule, and can be consumed with food.

Fish oil can bring great relief to your cat.

Aloe Vera oil when applied to dry and scaly areas brings relief.

Garlic oil helps as a preventive measure for further bug bites.

Urinary Tract Infection: This is another common health problem with the cats. The obvious thing here is the cat's reluctance to use the litter pan. Once the problem is diagnosed, you may give various herbs that will bring relief to the cat.

Couchgrass is one such cleansing and toning herb, which has an anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory power.

There is a commercially prepared tincture that can be used in food of the cat.

Golden Seal and Echinacea are believed by some to possibly help with the problem.

Intestinal Parasites such as round worms: These are common problems with the cats and are traceable in the feces of cats as small white seeds.

Garlic Oil may be effective for removing parasites.

A piece of clove crushed with garlic is a folk remedy to remove tapeworm from the cat's body but I would always get a vet's assistance at any sign of this condition.

Bowel and digestive disturbances: The symptoms are diarrhea and vomiting.

Part-V: Caring for Your Cat

Twenty Tips for Caring for Your Cat

Cats are excellent pets. Follow these simple tips to care for a great life-long companion.



Local governments have their own cat registration laws.

Adhere to these laws to ensure complete protection.

Get a cat collar with a tag where you put all necessary details like the name of your pet, your name, and contact details.

This assures the safe return of your pet if you lose your pet for any reason.

Feed your cat a nutritional and well-balanced diet and ensure easy access to fresh, clean water to keep your cat healthy and fit.

Take your cat to the veterinarian for regular checkups. It is necessary to schedule vet visits from the time you bring home your kitten.

Keep your furniture safe from scratching episodes. You can train cats to use special scratching posts. Cats are fast learners.

Have the Vet neuter or spay your cat at the age they advise. This helps maintain the health of your cat.

Regular grooming of your cat’s coat will keep it soft, shiny and healthy. It prevents ingestion of hair by cats – that may cause serious problems due to hairballs.

Always set aside separate and exclusive time for playing and spending time with your cat. Plan regular exercise sessions to maintain the physical health of your cat. It also helps you bond with your feline companion. This is essential to ensure a stable and happy mental state of your pet cat.

Start training your kitten from the time you bring it home. Kittens are small bundles of high-energy. Be gentle but be firm too. Place a ticking clock in its bed to mimic its mother’s heartbeat. Offer small and safe toys for your kitten to play and enjoy.

Litter training is essential. Place your kitten’s litter box in a well-ventilated and private place. Keep separate litter boxes for each kitten.

Do not allow your cat to venture outdoors without supervision. Restrict such outings, as it might have an accident or contract an illness. Keep your cat indoors to maintain the health of your cat.

You should never inflict any physical punishment on your kittens or cats. It only confuses them and makes them scared of you.

Protect your cat from inquisitive and rough handling of your guests. Keep them in a separate room to avoid any unpleasantness. Cats could inflict harm, as they could scratch to protect themselves.

Caring for a pregnant cat requires extra care and attention. Do not allow it outdoors. Give it additional food according to your vet’s instructions. Give it a nice and cozy bed. Collect complete information in advance about cat care for such special times.

Cats are very possessive and may not like extra attention you shower on your newborn baby. Instead, reassure your cat by giving it a little more attention.

Your pet cats could wake you at unseemly hours to have their food. Discourage such habits and do not give them anything at such times. Cats learn to respect feeding times and will soon fall into a regular routine.

Get pet-sitters to care for your cat while you go on vacation.

Allow sufficient time for your cat to grasp and learn the correct behavior you expect of it.

Medical care for your cat could be costly. Get information from the Internet to reduce vet visits but always get the advice of your local vet on serious matters.

Get your cat accustomed to all kinds of dry and wet food so that you can feed it any type of food.

14. Grooming Your Cat and Hygiene

Though your cat spends a lot of time cleaning itself, they do need a regular brushing and cleaning. This helps to remove the loose hair, dead skin and also prevents matting. Regular brushing helps to keep parasites and fleas away.



Regular grooming

Regular grooming should be started early in the life of a cat and done regularly. If you have a long-haired cat, you will need more frequent sessions. However, with short-haired cats, once a week is sufficient to prevent matting.

Regular grooming helps to keep your cat not only good and healthy, but also helps you to develop a wonderful bond with your pet. You get to know your cat well through these sessions and you can check for fleas, lumps, sores, ticks or irritated skin.

Combing

Combing regularly maintains good hygiene among cats. Gently comb towards the hair growth point and keep tangles away. You may use your fingers to untangle the fur.

There are combs available in the market for combing your pet’s hair. Use a comb with wide teeth for cats that have long hair and a fine-toothed comb for cats with short hair - these combs are best for picking up fleas and dirt from the cat’s coat.

Brushing

Brushing regularly stimulates the cat’s skin and helps natural oils to distribute more evenly. This helps your cat’s fur to maintain its shininess. You may use a soft bristle brush or a wire slicker brush. A rubber-grooming device could help to massage the skin of the cat.

Nail trimming

Use the cat nail trimmer to cut the nails of your cat. Gently press the paw to bring out the cat’s nail and trim the sharp point. However, be careful that you do not harm the blood vessels. You may ask your vet for help when you try it out the first time.

Bathing

Bathing may not be a favorite practice for every cat. However, bathing helps prevent tangling and matting. Use medicated

shampoos for your cat. Specific areas that may need particular attention are:

Ears: Use cotton swabs to clean the cat’s ear, as they trap lot of dirt. Be very careful when you clean the ears.

Eyes and nose: Be particularly careful in wiping their nose and eyes. Wet a cotton ball with saline water to wipe the eyelids (NOT the eyes) of the cat gently.

Dry the cat: Dry the cat by gently squeezing the excess water from the fur. After this wrap the cat in a large soft towel, and then comb any tangles gently.

However, not using a blow dryer is a good idea as the sound scares most cats.

Cat Diet



Canned cat food is the best for your cat. It contains all essential nutrients and minerals in appropriate quantities. It also contains sufficient water. Canned cat food is available in three different types:

Crunchy nuggets are available as dry food or kibble. You can store these packages at room temperature for many weeks. They are economical and you can leave it in your cat’s feeding bowl all-day without it getting spoiled. Such crunchy food prevents formation of dental plaque. However, it could cause bladder stones if eaten to excess.



Wet canned food can stay okay for a long period if you do not open it. Once you open it, you can store left overs in the refrigerator for no more than a day. It should be put inside an airtight container. Any leftover or uneaten canned food on cat’s food bowl should be discarded after fifteen to twenty minutes. It could accumulate harmful bacteria. You can add a little cooked pasta, rice or potatoes to regular canned food to add to the taste and nutrition value.

Semi moist canned food is essentially wet nuggets. It is available in individual meal-size pouches. Some of them are in different colors and shapes. You can store them in resealable containers at room temperature. Such food is not very high in nutrition.

Additional Foods for Your Cat

A few extra special foods here and there can add flavor to your cat’s diet. You can give a few bits of tuna fish once-in-a-while if your cat does not have any urinary tract problems. Strained meat, minced chicken or turkey, poultry baby foods and white rice are good for a recuperating cat. Always check for any bones as bones could lodge within the cat’s throat and choke it.

Special treats include canned mackerel, herring, or sardines, chicken giblets, cheese, and vegetables in small quantities. Fresh water is essential for your cat. Keep a bowl of fresh, clean water always readily available. Change water every morning.

Essential Tips

Never feed dog food to your cat, as dog food lacks taurine and necessary proteins.

Do not feed leftovers from your plate, as it could upset your cat’s digestive system.

Do not give chocolates, spicy and oily food, or onions to your cat.

Do not give raw egg whites, uncooked fish, beef, pork, poultry, or meats not approved by your vet.

Kittens require many small feeds during the day. Keep dry food available all through the day. Adult cats could do with a single meal each day.

Maintain a specific feeding schedule for your cat.

Always give food to your cat in a clean bowl. Feed it in the same bowl and at the same time and place.

Do not allow children to come near your cats while feeding, or to try to disturb or distract them in any manner.

Playing and Exercise

Cats and kittens love to play with you and other cats or kittens. Cats normally do not play for long periods. Brief spells of play normally early in the morning and evening can keep the emotional base of your feline companion intact. It also maintains the physical health of your cat.



Always maintain a regular playing and exercising time. Stick to this schedule, as cats would expect you to play at the same time every day.

Boredom is often the main cause behind aggressive behavior, overeating, or compulsive chewing habits of your cat. Interactive playing builds and strengthens bonding between you and your cat. Shy cats gain a lot of confidence through such play sessions. They provide physical and mental exercise. The cat does not feel as much boredom when staying indoors.

Simple Toys That Provide Exercise for Your Cat

Tie a string around a cat toy and hang it in a dangling position. You can tie any object at the end of a chopstick. Kittens and cats love jumping and trying to catch the dangling object.

Cats love playing with paper bags. They would try to explore within the bag and walk out majestically. You can cut a few holes in the bag to provide them many exit points. Placing their toys within these openings would be more enjoyable.

Give an empty toilet paper roll and your cat will play with it like a bat. You could additionally put some object within the roll and enjoy watching it play enthusiastically.

Try hiding one of your cat’s toys underneath a pillow or in between cushions. Your cat would love to play retrieving games.

Use a flashlight to beam light on the floor and walls in a semi-dark room. Cats love chasing the beam and it provides both enjoyment and exercise.

Roll a few ice cubes on a solid floor and your kitten will love playing ice hockey with them. Alternatively, put a few cubes in an empty bathtub and enjoy your kitten’s game. Similarly, ping-pong balls in the bathtub also provide a lot of entertainment and exercise to your feline companions.

Fresh catnip toys prove very enjoyable to cats. They are happy tearing away at the toy and releasing more and more catnip. They then roll in it ecstatically.

Certain motorized toys like mice or toys with fur tails could incite the predator instinct in your felines. However, do not overdo this game as it could tire your cat too much.

Provide a windowsill for your cat to have a look outside.
Alternatively, allow it to gaze at an aquarium. Some cats love watching television. You can put on videotapes of mice or birds for your cat to sit and watch.

Housing Your Cat

When you bring home your kitten from a shelter or breeder, it will be away from its mother for the first time. It will be among new and strange smells, people, and a whole strange environment.

Allow it time to settle down. Some suggest applying butter to their paws. This makes cats leave their scent behind and offers faster acclimatization due to same smells everywhere.



For the initial few days, give it a well-wrapped hot-water bottle for warmth. Do not change the feed drastically. Continue with the same diet as it had at its previous home. Some kittens are allergic to cow's milk. If it shows signs of discomfort, discontinue it and reintroduce it later after sufficient dilution. Dietary changes should be made gradually.

Make a comfortable and snug sleeping box for your kitten from boxes or baskets. Make sure that there is no way that the kitten might catch its claws in the weave of a basket or blanket.

Older cats will prefer sleeping above ground-level, preferably on a chair or similar elevated places.

Provide sufficient toys and play things for your cat or kitten. Simple toys include ping-pong balls, toys tied to the end of strings and hung on doorknobs, large paper bags with many windows and tunnels.

Blank newsprint could be good bedding for your new cat. Do not use old newspapers as the ink may contain chemicals that could be rubbed into the cat's fur and ingested when the cat licks itself with possibly harmful results.

But the blank paper is cheap when you can get the ends of rolls from your local newspaper office, it provides a lot of warmth and it is easily disposable.

There will not be any problems of lice, worms, or fleas.

Cats prefer staying in warm places.

Use cat baskets with a waterproof base and keep them slightly elevated. This prevents kittens from remaining in their mess, if there are any accidents. A litter box is essential for a cat at home.

Change litter daily. Once a week, empty litter completely and wash the tray thoroughly with detergent and hot water. Do not use any disinfectants in the litter box cleaning, as cats are allergic to disinfectants. Place the cleaned, dry litter box at a private and secluded place away from noise and disturbances.

Use flat-bottomed feeding and drinking water bowls for your cat. These bowls should have a solid bottom. Placing feeding bowls on newspaper sheets can lessen any nuisances of

droppings. Clean these bowls daily with water and remove any traces of food as soon as possible.

Part-VI : Training Your Cat

Introducing Your Pets to a New Cat

Pets are never the best friends, although you can try making them tolerate each other and live together without any major incidents.

Cats are territorial creatures and need a gradual introduction to new pets. Kittens separated from their littermates and mother tend to become friends faster but, usually, slow introductions prove to be the safest bet.



Start by confining your new cat or kitten to a medium sized room with its bed, litter box, food and water. Feeding time for your new and old pets should be on either side of a door. This associates eating with each other's smells. You can start by keeping food dishes at a considerable distance from the door. Slowly, reduce the distance and bring them as close on either side of the door as possible.

You can rub a towel on an animal and place it underneath the other's feeding bowl. You can interchange sleeping blankets to help cats get accustomed to scents of other pets. After some time, allow the new pet to stroll around the house while

confining other pets in the new pet's room. This helps them associate with other's smells without confronting each other face-to-face.

Next, bring the pets back to their regular places and allow them to see each other through a small dividing door. Continue with this process under supervision for a few days.

Prolong direct contact and interaction between old and new pets for a period. This helps them to overcome any feeling of aggression. Gradual introduction can make the process simpler and acceptable. Sometimes, one of your pets could translate play signals as signs of aggression and behave fearfully. You then need to start over the entire process all again. You can also seek professional advice.

If you have to introduce your cat to a resident dog, it requires more stringent measures and acceptance could take more time. Although you can go along the same procedure, exercise more caution, as cats incite the predator instinct on a dog. Always keep your pets in separate enclosures while you are not at home.

Training Tips for Cats

You can train your cats successfully, although different cats could require quite different amounts of time. Cats have their own way of grasping tricks. You should never impose training sessions on cats. Allow them time to learn and accept these sessions.



Essential Training Tips

Start your training schedules early in their life. Do not allow kittens to become full-grown without necessary training.

Teach a single behavior at a time. Allow it to grasp and add that into its routine before starting with the next.

Always reward your cat once it masters a behavior or trick. You can offer specially manufactured food treats.

Always precede a command with the cat's name. Use the same type and order of words every time you give the specific command.

Do not proceed to the next step in training until your cat is perfect with the first step. It will only confuse your cat.

Litter box training could take time. Reward your cat every time it uses the litter box.

Train your cat before mealtimes, as food treats prove enticing only then. But, do not starve your cats, as hungry cats could get angry and unresponsive.

Keep training sessions short and well within fifteen minutes. Prolonged sessions could bore your cat and make it listless.

Keep away all distracting noises and things during training sessions.

Keep training sessions to regular times. Training your cat occasionally cannot get you desired results.

If your cat does not obey or follow your command, do not punish or shout at your cat. Instead, ignore its presence completely. The cat will learn to respect your command the next time around.

Never inflict any physical punishment on your cat. It will distance your cat from you. Your pet would fear you and it is impossible to train a cat that is scared of you.

Keep training sessions separate from other playtime. It is necessary to have special playtime with your cat to build and bond with your cat.

While training your cat, you should get to its level. You cannot stand like a towering giant and train a small kitten.

Never show your frustration on your cat. Cats are gentle and loving creatures. It requires extreme patience to deal and train them. Becoming annoyed or frustrated cannot get you anywhere.

Always have a thorough checkup of your cat before starting with your training sessions. Health problems can deter cats from grasping and responding as you would like it to.

Trainer, training, rewards, sessions, and everything associated with training should be the same always. Cats would not be able to change to different things at different times.

How to Train Your Cat - and What Not to Do

It is possible to train your cat. Cats learn things through observation and by satisfying their natural curiosity. The learning period of a kitten starts at around three weeks. They open their eyes and ears at that time and thereafter start exploring everywhere. They are fearless at this stage. Slowly, around seven weeks they start developing fear of things. Hence, scheduling your training according to such periods can be beneficial.



However, it is not always possible to bring home a kitten at such a tender age. You can bring it home possibly at around twelve weeks. Yet, you can start training your kitten as soon as it comes home. Cats are adaptable creatures and they soon adjust and fit themselves well within the new environment.

Important Do's of Cat Training

Keep repeating your pet's name while feeding, cuddling or petting it. Associating its name with something good makes it respond to your call.

Make a special scratching post and dangle a toy around it. Encourage your kitten to play with the toy. As soon as claws touch the post, it could start scratching at the post.

Putting catnip around a post would prompt a cat to scratch there. Alternatively, gently lift your kitten’s paws across the post in scratching motion. It will soon learn.

Always reward your kitten for good behavior.

Practice carrying your kitten on your shoulder and reinforce this position through regular utterances of ‘Stay’.

Repeat training sessions every day. Keep it short (for fifteen minutes only). These sessions should be the same every day. You should use the same commands, things and practice at the same place every day. This helps cats to understand commands more easily and quickly.

Important Don’ts of Cat Training

Never inflict any physical punishment on your kitten. Instead, divert its attention to something else while repeating a stern ‘NO’.

Never use its name while saying ‘NO’.

Cats are dignified creatures and need to please themselves. Hence, never laugh at a cat or offend it in any other manner.

How to Train Your Cat to Walk with a Leash

Leash training your cat requires a lot of patience. Cats may not accept a harness and leash immediately. Start by purchasing a comfortably fitting harness. It should be neither too tight nor too heavy. Before putting it on your cat, keep it near your cat for a few days. This helps your cat get accustomed to the smell and sight of the harness and leash.



There should be sufficient space for two fingers between your cat's skin and leash. Put the leash on your cat just before its mealtime and thereafter feed its favorite meal. If your cat finds it disturbing, distract its attention by playing with any of its favorite toys. Allow it to wear its harness for some time. Gradually, increase the duration of such wearing. Once you find your cat accepting and getting accustomed, remove the leash for some time in between.

Allow your cat to wear its leash and move around the house without experiencing any discomfort. Once the cat is comfortable with the harness, attach the harness to the leash. Your cat may resent it at first. However, allow it to be on the leash for some more time.

Repeat such sessions for a few days. Soon your cat should accept the harness and leash naturally. Allow it to walk around the house. However, be careful to see that the harness does not entangle with any furniture in the house.

You should praise and offer loving hugs to your cat for being such a good cat while it is on the leash and harness. Next, put him on the leash and take him out for small strolls in your backyard or porch. Allow sufficient time for your cat to become accustomed to all types of sounds and sights while going for a stroll in the garden or park. Initially, your cat may not understand your behavior. Nevertheless, it will soon accept such outings as the norm and walk with you.

Never impose or force your cat to walk with you. If your cat refuses to budge with the leash, allow it to take its own time. If it is not in a good mood one day, let it be. Try again some other day and you will find it easy to put the leash and harness on your cat.

Training Your Cat to Come When Called

Cats will come to you once it gets accustomed to a specific word. Normally, it needs to associate this word with something pleasant and nice. Therefore, use the name as often as you can. Always call her by her name while petting and cuddling her. You can do the same while brushing or giving food.



Choose a special dry snack, different from the regular dry food. Keep uttering the word ‘Snack’ or ‘Dessert’ while giving it this special snack. Give a single piece on its dish while uttering the same word. Thereafter, give it another piece and say the same word again. Move away from the room. If your cat still whines for the food, give it one more piece uttering the same word.

Follow the same procedure for few days and soon you will find your cat responding to your call immediately, wherever it might be.

Essential Tips

The snack should be of a small quantity, preferably small pieces of a single unit.

Snacks should be nutritious and crunchy, so that it proves healthy for your cat’s teeth.

Do not allow children to train your cat in this manner. They might overfeed it and cause it harm.

Schedule training sessions regularly and not only if you want to take your pet for a bath or to the vet.

How to Litter Train Your Cat

Cats are fussy creatures. Litter training is an important and necessary aspect of cat training. It is not simple, as cats prefer going to the toilet in open and secluded areas. Litter training is going against their natural instincts and therefore could take few weeks or months.



If you get a litter-trained cat from shelter homes, it is fine. Normally, kittens receive training from their trained mothers. They copy and follow their mother. Use similar litter-trays as your kittens were accustomed to at their shelters.

While litter training your kittens, allot a separate litter box and an extra one for each kitten, and cat in the house. Place this preferably in a private but easily accessible place, away from noises and disturbances. Also, place it away from feeding areas and dark basements.

A litter tray should be sufficiently large and deep to prevent any spillage of litter when they dig. Although open trays are a good idea, some prefer hooded trays to get more privacy. Remove and change soiled litter daily. Empty the tray completely once every week and clean it with detergent and

hot water. Do not use disinfectants, as cats are allergic to disinfectants.

Litter Training

While litter training your cat, stick to a single training option irrespective of the time it takes for your cat to accept this training technique. If you change the technique, it will only cause confusion.

More Litter Box Training Tips

Some, but not all cats, can be taught to use a toilet.

Always closely watch your cat and, if it shows any sign of stress or there seems to be any risk, stop this part of its training altogether.

Start by placing the litter box in the bathroom. As soon as your kitten is finished with the food, place it inside a box and scratch its paws in the litter. Your kitten would soon learn this. It would now be comfortable with the litter box being in the bathroom.



Now start raising the height of the litter box by placing a single book underneath the litter box. Your kitten would gradually learn to jump to the height of the litter box.

Increase the height gradually to reach the height of the toilet seat. Be careful not to rush your cat into litter training.

Slowly, start mixing old newspapers with litter in the litter-box. Gradually, increase the amount of newspaper and reduce the amount of litter. By the time the height of the litter box is

at par with that of toilet seat, it should contain only newspaper and no litter.

Now, place litter box on toilet seat, preferably well secured. It is better to use a cardboard box in place of a plastic litter box. Allow some time for your cat to get accustomed to the litter box being on toilet seat at all times. Next, cut a small hole in the middle of the box. Slowly, start cutting the sides of the box as well.

Gradually, it should be a flat cardboard piece with a hole in the middle and a little paper. Allow your cat to grasp and understand the process. You might find your cat leaping on to the toilet seat and using it perfectly.

But, don't worry if it doesn't get the trick.

Never teach your cat to flush, as it will keep doing it every other time. You have to flush every time your cat uses the toilet.

Stopping Your Cat from Biting

Cats could bite for a variety of reasons. Cats’ mouths have many bacteria that can cause infections through bites. Simple facts that could stop your cat from biting:



Preferably, do not touch or pet your cat’s belly. It makes it feel defenseless and it could bite you.

Petting could over-stimulate your cat and it could bite you. Be careful to notice warning signals like any tail lashing or stoppage of purring.

Spend sufficient time with your cat and try to understand it. Cats become aggressive on hearing loud noises. Do not startle your cat, as it could lash out and bite in self-defense.

Avoid leaving your cat alone and unattended for long periods. Bored cats turn aggressive and could end up scratching and biting.

Neuter male cats, as they turn aggressive if unneutered.

Cats try to hide their injuries and sickness. They could bite you if you accidentally touch any injured part. Take your pet for a thorough check-up for any ailments or injuries.

Sometimes cats could be in an alert mode with flattened ears, tail lashing, growling, and hissing. Stay away from your cat during such periods, as they could hit and bite at anything moving around them.

Do not offer your fingers or toes as play things for young kittens. They would grow to learn these as toys and thereby bite you.

Curbing Your Cat's Aggression

Cat's aggression could cause serious wounds and would require medical attention. You can curb your cat's aggression through simple measures -



Normally, cats give out warning signals before turning aggressive. Move away from your cat during aggressive moods and allow it to calm down.

Sudden noises like dropping a bowl could divert the cat's aggression. Otherwise, use any other diversionary tactic like a favorite toy.

Take your cat for a medical check-up if your cat becomes aggressive often. It could be due to some pain, illness, or injury.

Refrain from maintaining eye contact with your cat for long periods. Look away from the cat and it could divert the cat onto something else and thereby lose its aggression.

Cats mistreated anytime earlier or a cat lacking proper socialization could become aggressive. Therefore, socialize your kitten from the time it comes into your house.

Never inflict any physical punishment on your cat or kitten to discipline or train it. Cats become aggressive due to such physical punishments. Talking in a stern tone can instill discipline in your kitten or cat.

Devote sufficient time for your cat so that it does not feel lonely. Always stick to a specific exercise or playtime session like early mornings or evenings. Cats tend to be happy with these sessions and do not turn aggressive.

Stopping Your Cat from Eating Houseplants

Cats love eating plants. It could become a habit if not curbed early.



Most plants are toxic to a cat and could cause serious consequences like poisoning. Follow simple measures to make cats stay away from plants -

Cats eat plants to purge their system of any uneasiness.

Introduce and encourage your cat to eat cat-friendly plants like herbs, potted grass, and catnip. These are harmless and provide necessary relief to your cat.

Avoid keeping toxic plants in your house or garden. Otherwise, relocate them to such a place that your cat cannot reach them.

Include lots of fiber in your cat's diet. Cats often eat plants to make up for this lack of essential nutrient in their diet.

You can use repulsive sprays on your plants to keep cats away from them. Sprinkling smell and taste repellants like vinegar, chili oil, sauce, and similar others can keep cats away from your potted friends.

Sometimes, cats eat plants to get your attention. If your cat suffers from emotional stress for any reason, it could start eating houseplants. Spending sufficient time with your pet can make it feel loved and wanted.

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