

FACTSHEET

Introducing curfews

An overnight curfew protects your cat from danger. Cats have accidents involving cars, dogs and unkind people primarily at night. They are also more likely to hunt at night, putting themselves and wildlife at risk of injury or death.

The goal of an overnight curfew is training your cat to come inside at dusk, then to remain indoors overnight. A consistent routine and patience will yield successful results. A hungry cat will be much easier to call inside, so do not offer an evening meal until your cat is indoors at the end of the day. Keep your cat inside until dawn, offer breakfast, then allow your cat outside again. Avoid leaving dry biscuits outside for your cat.

Initially, your cat may disturb your sleep for a week or two during the adjustment period. It's fine to shut your bedroom door, or even to isolate your cat in one part of the house overnight if that's what you would prefer. This is not unkind, and does not need to be permanent, but is part of teaching your cat that nights are for solo play or for sleeping.

Make sure your cat has access to at least one litter tray and fresh water. It's also a good idea to have a few special toys that are only brought out at night. Automatic feeders are also a great idea and can be programmed for early hours of the morning with a small amount of food. This will stop your cat waking you at sunrise and demanding an early breakfast. Interactive toys and food puzzles are also fabulous for keeping your cat busy while you sleep at night.

It is important to realise that every cat has a unique personality and because of this will have a different adjustment period to an overnight curfew. Having a safe, warm environment will encourage your cat to stay inside at night, easing the transition. A curfew doesn't have to be just from dusk until dawn. You might allow your cat two hours of outdoor time in the morning, with a curfew before you leave for work. Perhaps the neighbours let their dog out in the late afternoon, so for safety you might choose to adopt a mid-afternoon curfew for your cat. Or you might decide to give your cat outdoor access only when you are at home.

Whenever the curfew, the basics of training remain the same. A hungry cat will be eager to please you. Adjust your cat's meal times to match the times you would like your cat to come inside. Remember that animals find security in routine and even thrive on it. Be regular with your routine and be patient with your cat. Products like 'Feliway', a synthetic pheromone spray which comforts cats, can assist your cat with settling in during the initial curfew period. Again, consistency and patience are the keys to help both you and your cat adapt to a curfew with the best results.

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